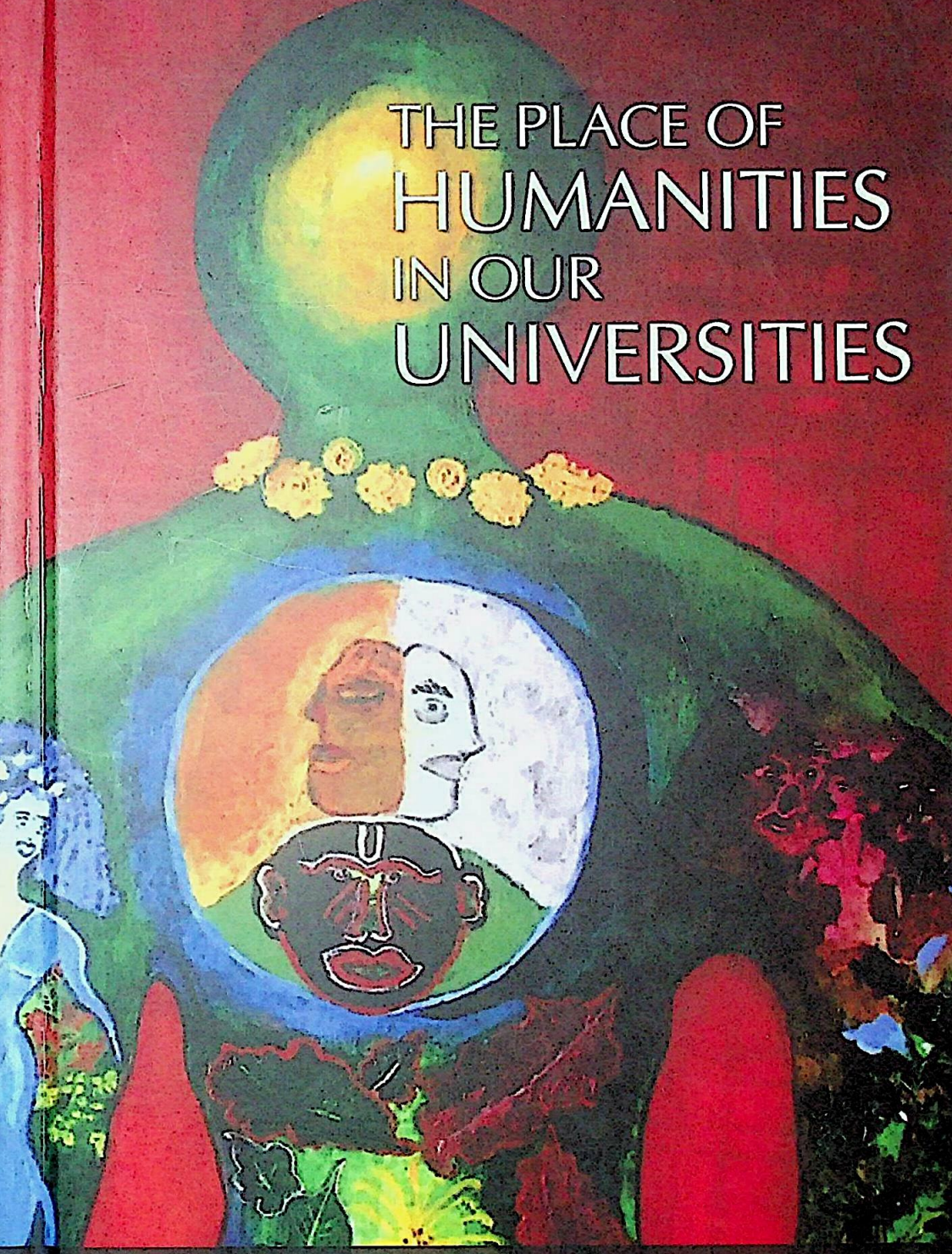
THE PLACE OF HUMANITIES IN OUR UNIVERSITIES



Edited by Mrinal Miri

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The Place of Humanities in Our Universities

This volume examines the critical role of the humanities in universities in India and attempts to redefine its place, meaning and function in education. Bringing together distinguished scholars in the country, it debates the status and predicament of the humanities in the academic programmes within universities. The issues raised here touch upon the entire gamut of problems that a university faces in finding an adequate, rightful and wholesome place for the humanities in its academic curriculum. It discusses the difficulties in the specific identity of disciplines classed under the humanities; the powerful reach of the sciences and technological inroads in the teaching and practice of all disciplines; the relative academic balancing of disciplines in different universities in India; the culture, value and the idea of the university; digitisation of the humanities and online access, and their specific impact on research in the concerned disciplines. The volume also presents an instructive debate on the so-called appropriation of traditional social science concerns by other departments.

This book will interest those in education, humanities and social sciences, governance and public policy, and South Asian studies.

Mrinal Miri taught Philosophy and retired as Vice-Chancellor of North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, India. He has previously served as Chairman, Indian Council of Philosophical Research; Director, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla; Chancellor, Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh; and Chairman, Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). He has also been a nominated member of the upper house (Rajya Sabha) of Parliament of India. He has a BA in Philosophy from Presidency College, Calcutta; MA in Philosophy from St. Stephen's College, Delhi; and a PhD from the University of Cambridge. He has taught at St. Stephen's College and has been visiting professor in many universities. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan for his contribution to education and literature. His main interests are in philosophy of culture and moral philosophy and issues relating to tribal cultures of India. He has published widely across journals and books, including *Identity and the Moral Life* (2003), *Philosophy and Education* (2014) and *The Idea of Surplus: Tagore and Contemporary Human Sciences* (edited, Routledge, 2016). His translation into English of Rasna Barua's Assamese novel *Xeji Pator Kahini* has been published as *The Partings*.

The Place of Humanities in Our Universities

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Contents

Notes on contributors vii
Preface viii

Introduction 1
MRINAL MIRI

1 The humanities in the English-speaking West 8
AKEEL BILGRAMI

2 Re-defining the humanities: place, meaning, function 14
SUPRIYA CHAUDHURI

3 The place of humanities 26
P. K. MUKHOPADHYAY

4 The predicament of the humanities: reading through Bill Reading's *The University in Ruins* 67
ALOK RAI

5 Humanities in the age of their digital operability 77
AMLAN DAS GUPTA

6 The indispensability of humanities 85
RAJEEV BHARGAVA

7 Are we in for post-humanist post-humanities? 99
PRASENJIT BISWAS

8 Some staccato observations on interactive studies 136
RAJENDRA PRASAD

9 Imaginaries of ignorance: five ideas of the university and the place of the humanities within them 140
RUKMINI BHAYA NAIR

10 What humanities/social sciences can mean: transmuting the 'two cultures' idea 176
SASHEEJ HEGDE

11 MOOCs: virtual but not virtuous 189
APOORVANAND

12 The place of humanities in university education 202
MRINAL MIRI

Index 211

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Preface

This volume puts together papers presented at a seminar on the 'The Place of Humanities in Our Universities', organised by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) New Delhi, India. The papers have been revised for publication. The conceptual reorientation in our thinking about higher education that has been taking place – admittedly without much incisive deliberation – and the consequent changes in our practice of higher education, have created a situation that demands a serious reconsideration of the steady diminution of the place being accorded to the humanities in our universities. The seminar was a response to this demand. It was hoped that such a seminar could bring together some of the most distinguished academics involved in teaching and research in the humanities who would collectively help us raise the right questions and seek the right answers to them. The volume will be a test of the extent to which this hope has been fulfilled.

At the time of the seminar, I was the Chairman of Indian Council of Philosophical Research and the negotiations for publication took place during my Chairmanship. Subsequently Professor S. R. Bhatt has taken over as Chairman, and this publication has his blessings.

I wish also to put on record of my deep appreciation of the help I received from Dr Abhishek Kumar. Abhishek helped me with every aspect of the preparation of the manuscript from handling all correspondence with the authors to ensuring adherence to the publisher's style regulations and formatting. His editorial knowledge and intelligence will be much in evidence in the entire text. I am truly grateful to Abhishek for the help given so utterly selflessly.

Introduction

Mrinal Miri

The volume brings together papers presented at a seminar on "The Place of Humanities in Our Universities," organised by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research. As the seminar proceeded it became clear that there was a much more interesting variety of perspectives on the theme than perhaps was envisaged by the proposal. The proceedings therefore had the potential of initiating a wide-ranging debate and discussion about the division and kinds of academic labour in our universities. This was the primary impulse behind the project of publishing the seminar papers. In any event, the participants in the seminar included some of the most distinguished academics in the country and a few from abroad. It was important that their thinking on the theme of the seminar was made available to interested readers.

Akeel Bilgrami's chapter shows how the ethical climate of our times marked by the enormous public influence of the corporates and the support they receive from government organisations have brought about something like a sea-change in teaching and research practices of our universities. The social sciences have come to be dominated by "quantitative and arcanely analytic methods" leaving it to literature ["English"] and culture studies to pursue aspects of their discipline that reach wider than what is allowed by these methods. But, at the same time, the reduction of philosophy to a "coterie" discipline open only to authentic members of the exclusive club, and the fact that these wider reaches are explored in sites other than their original homes, have meant that such explorations suffer unsurprisingly from a pervasive lack of rigour.

Supriya Chaudhuri argues that the study of humanities in our universities must be informed by a new understanding of what it is to be human – an understanding that moves resolutely away from the notion of the human – as opposed, among others, to the animal – and

of humanism of European modernity. It makes little sense now in our "post human" condition

> to speak of the study of the humanities as 'forming us towards being human'. Rather, we are aware that our humanity – such as it is – is a condition of profound dependence on the other constituents of our world, so that we are not human in and for ourselves, but by and for others. So if there is a set of disciplines called the humanities, they should enable us to ask questions about the interdependence of animals, humans and machines, indeed of the connectedness of the entire natural world and our activity within it as agents and as receiving subjects.

Importantly, Chaudhuri also suggests that the "new humanities" (a commonly accepted name for "digital humanities" discussed by Amlan Das Gupta in his paper) "properly considered, might be a way of rethinking the relation between science, art and philosophy, and allow us to re-define and re-instate the humanities."

P. K. Mukhopadhyay's scholarly chapter traces the history of the relationship between what we now call the natural sciences and the academic disciplines which have come to be grouped together under the label of "humanities." Mukhopadhyay pays special attention to philosophy as a pivotal discipline and deplores the diminution of the subject in India primarily as a result of the colonial intervention, but also for other possible reasons, and its reduction to "vedanta" teachings and spiritualism. This has, on the one hand, prevented our extraordinarily rich and diverse philosophical tradition from playing the kind of role it could have in determining the arena and contours of academic labour in our universities, and helped, on the other hand, the growth of "scientism" – an altogether spurious academic endeavour. Mukhopadhyaya's paper, however, remains remarkable for its wide-ranging scholarship that covers the Western intellectual tradition with magisterial sweep.

Alok Rai's elegantly written chapter takes the cue from a reading of Bill Reading's *The University in Ruins*. There are large recognizable steps in the self-destructive journey of universities in the West from medieval theodicy and Kantian universalism of reason of modernity till the time when they actually presided over their own ruins. Broadly speaking these steps are: the "transmutation" of universal reason to a focus on culture and consensus on the right and the good, the rise of globalization and "liberalism" – liberalization, ascendency of "countability" that replaces "accountability", growing salience of

theory with the emergence of "race, class gender, and – in the Indian instance – caste" as insistent axes of experience that rendered the "previous consensus" "merely insensitive and arrogant." The end of consensus – F. R. Leavis' famous "That is so, isn't it" – is also the beginning of conflict. "But conflict over interpretation and meaning, over apparently irreconcilable values, patient negotiation through conversation, speaking and being spoken to (and sometimes at) these are not embarrassments that can be transcended through some combination of skill and fortune – they are constitutive of our humanity." It is this inherent complexity of being human that departments of humanities must engage with and claim their rightful place.

Amlan Das Gupta welcomes the arrival, led by the singular effort of Jadavpur University, of digital humanities in our country. Digital humanities have thrown open avenues of access and research in the humanities, music and culture in ways that couldn't have been imagined even a very short while ago in the history of these disciplines. The almost magical potential of scholarly search in the digital world has opened the researcher's mind to surprising and hitherto unthought of possibilities of scholarship. "It is here that the university as the location for the *academic* pursuit of digital humanities becomes important: for whereas all sorts of public institutions build archives, the university is the space which allows sustained critical reflection on its methods and principles and promotes the use of the archive as a research archive. It is here that new protocols of metadata must be devised, new tools for visualization and collation generated."

In his marvellously lucid chapter, Rajeev Bhargava argues that the humanities must form a core element of the social sciences. Philosophy – considered to be a major humanities discipline – is indispensable for the social sciences insofar as social sciences inevitably make use of concepts which have to do with any rational attempt at understanding human beings whether in their capacity as individuals, or as enmeshed in interrelationships with other humans, as constituting human collectives, or in their relationship to the non-human world. Two prime examples of such concepts are freedom and justice. While the social sciences make use of these concepts, it is the job of philosophy to seek and provide clarity about their use in the complex network of diverse concepts in which they are willy-nilly implicated. (One could perhaps add that philosophical consideration of these and other concepts, useful for the social scientist, has gone on from ancient times till today in different traditions of philosophical thought. There is no final philosophical report on these concepts, nor is it possible that there will be one in the future. And this absence of finality in philosophy

inevitably permeates the social sciences as well.) Bhargava limits himself to philosophical practice considered as conceptual analysis. I am sure, however, that he will agree that academic philosophy practised in ways other than conceptual analysis can equally enrich and deepen the social scientist's engagement with human beings in society.

Bhargava goes much further and shows, in deft argumentative steps, that it is not just philosophy, but also the study of the mythic and the mimetic (as replete in social imaginaries – "images, stories, legends, folk tales fables, morality plays") in their extraordinarily diverse possibilities of meanings, is inescapable for any adequate idea of a social science. Similarly, religion, insofar as it is part of a complex web of secular life, as, e.g., in India and other Asiatic societies, must form part of the social scientist's interest and serious consideration. Also, religion must be taken seriously not just as an object of social scientific study, as an explanandum, but also as a tool with which to understand and explain human practice.

Prasenjit Biswas's chapter raises theoretical and experiential issues relating to contemporary transformation of humanities as a combined body of disciplines. It traces the genealogy of humanities in terms of the regeneration of "the plasticity of the phenomenon of being human into an area of cognitive and post-humanistic techno-eco-human geo-academia." The genealogy shows that humanities as an embedded ethical endeavour to respond to the other have undergone an "unhomely" transformation in not having a proper concept of being human and yet wandering into a "demonstrative mode of othering without the full presence of the other." This is what the paper puts forth, following Heidegger and Nietzsche, as "surpassing the anti-human" in humanities that happens only from the other's end and not from one's own intellectual positions. The paper raises the question: "Can humanities in a critical manner overturn this embedded nihilism, this remaindering of itself into wavering of the creative and the will-to-power aspects of unhomeliness of being human?" Biswas attempts to answer this question from the perspective of geo-academia, which works out new grounds for doing humanities by involving digital and techno-humanities, post-human subjectivities in the form of extending the human horizon to intelligent machines, other animals and lower forms of life by attributing "flesh" to them. This intersubjective and reciprocally responsive ethical interrelationship with other species and intelligent machines, according to the paper, provides the new cue to the post-human transition to states of world as states of being without a breach or joint in which the human being as an observer can draw a distinction between such states. This is how

humanities now constructs a subsystem of internal self-referentiality for any system of observation, interpretation and understanding. The paper makes a radical claim that "such a subsystem makes the apparatus of knowing affected by the inner states of the other from within itself, which is possible because of a primordial and indissociable unity between the self and the world." This makes the paper an interesting read as it redescribes this process of becoming human as a project of recovery of humanities itself. The paper further argues that a project of recovering humanities would need an enchantment with "the unpatented non-objects and non-subjects of humanities" that probably inspires a state of bafflement and withdrawal. Post-humanist post-humanities in that sense will only create inspiring transhumant moments in creating a set of ecological, technological and prosthetic "interlopers." These interlopers are going to be the (im)proper subjects of humanities as a system of academic and intellectual learning and understanding who can deal with emergent horizons of new technological, scientific and cultural reason. The paper ends in a radical lament about absence of cognizable frameworks from within humanities that can really fulfil such a purpose.

In his brief chapter, Rajendra Prasad stresses on the unique place that philosophy occupies among all academic disciplines. Philosophy, unlike other disciplines, can make any other discipline the primary object of its attention (e.g., philosophy of science, philosophy of history, philosophy of mathematic, etc.) and, in doing so, it retains without any loss, its own character as philosophy. While some might disagree with this, Prasad is surely right in his further contention that other disciplines can bring philosophy to bear upon their practice with academic profit, only if the philosophy they rely on satisfies the highest standards of its ongoing practice.

Rukmini Bhaya Nair's revisits the dichotomy between knowledge and ignorance using Plato's *Laws* (the Athenian Stranger's interventions in the *Dialogue*) and Jaques Ranciere's *The Ignorant School Master* as her "touchstones." She argues very effectively that it is utterly important to think of "agentive" ignoring as opposed to the common noun "ignorance" and the adjective "ignorant" which are used to qualify individuals. "What – and whom – we choose to ignore . . . is a truer measure of our attitude toward education than what we do know. The second lack can be remedied by infusions of knowledge; the first indicates a stance that is intrinsically hierarchical, snobbish and promotes inequity."

A mark of such ignoring is the near exclusion of courses in creative writing and diverse artistic practices. "Fiction writers, poets and

artists" have no place – or only an occasional minuscule one – among the teaching communities of our universities.

Nair presents to us five models of contemporary universities with widely varying potential for according a central place to the humanities understood in a broad sense. It is not surprising that "Tagore's Shantiniketan" – as originally conceived and intended – ranks highest among the five models. A combination of Shantiniketan and the "Internet University" model is perhaps ideally suited to ensure a rightful place for the humanities in modern university education.

Sasheej Hegde distinguishes between the scholastic and the reflexive in the practice of academic disciplines. To see them as opposing "dispositions" *internal* to disciplinary practice (whether humanistic or otherwise) is, he argues, the only way to salvage some respectability to the CP Snow dichotomy of "two cultures." The scholastic and the reflexive are opposing but not mutually exclusive dispositions. "The 'reflexive model' has to do with between 'techne' and 'episteme' [of the scholastic model] so that in the disposition internal to this model the principal task is to clarify values, interests and power relations as a basis for reflection and inquiry in the humanities and social sciences."

But the complicating fact about values is that they are subject, on the one hand, to socio-historical contingencies, and, on the other hand, may have inalienably subjective "autonomous" life. Objective explanations and justifications do not exhaust our understanding of what I or you, as individuals, do. It is the residue that is crucial for understanding individual agency – and the residue is one's own way of seeing things and what one expects of them. Hegde suggests that the place of humanities in our universities will depend on the adequate recognition of their role in highlighting this aspect of their being human.

Apoorvanand argues against the forced use of Massive Online Open Courseware (MOOC) by our education system, particularly in the teaching of the humanities disciplines. In fact, he believes, with much justification, that MOOCs overrides one of the very basic requirements of wholesome education, namely, the requirement of physicality – actual face-to-face interaction and interchange of ideas among the various human individuals involved in the extremely complex and subtle process of education. The idea of MOOC is also based on unacceptable assumptions about human inequality, justifiability of domination of one section of humanity by another, and the inconsequentiality of human diversity.

My own chapter begins with the important distinction between knowledge as utility and knowledge as valuable independently of its utility. I argue, following a well-known tradition of thinking about

university education, that it is the very special responsibility of universities to promote and sustain the pursuit of knowledge as valuable in itself independently of the use that it also inescapably has. The pursuit of such knowledge can be in terms of seeking *explanation*, as in the case of natural sciences, *or* in terms of *understanding*, as in the case of the humanities. The notion of evidence is central to the idea of explanation while for understanding the central notion is meaning. New knowledge for the sciences consists in the best possible verification for the present of a new explanatory theory, while for the humanities it is the opening up of a fresh perspective for viewing the human reality. For both kinds of pursuits, there is no finality at any given time.

1 The humanities in the English-speaking West

Akeel Bilgrami

There is, understandably, widespread boredom with the topic of the 'Humanities in Crisis'. In the Western world the crisis has been declared repeatedly for over half a century (perhaps from even much earlier – ever since the rise and consolidation of modern science). Anything so chronic cannot properly be described as a 'crisis'. So, a new rhetoric is needed every decade or so to uplift us from the boredom the topic induces and to make it seem as if it is acute rather than chronic.

One kind of incoherence lies in the fact that even as the overwhelming domination of STEM is protested, there is also a simultaneously voiced alarm that universities are not filling the seats in their Engineering schools because in the last quarter century or so the weight of emphasis in the economy has shifted from industrial capital to finance capital, so students are flocking to Business schools instead. That takes the E, possibly some of the T, out of STEM. And for a longer period than this, especially during the years of the dominance of computer science prior to the obsession with the finance industry, there has been protest about the neglect of the more purely theoretical aspects of Mathematics and Science. So there you have it – every letter in the acronym is in varying degrees both asserted and denied at the same time in describing our anxieties. Why, then, should we address this incoherently understood 'crisis' at all?

The more interesting question would be to look not at the allegedly destructive neglect of the Humanities, but rather at the *internal* trajectories within the Humanities in the last many years, and ask: Is there health in what we find?

If one steps back some distance to ask what large transformations have occurred in the Humanities in the last half century, one couldn't help noticing something conspicuous roughly around the creative turmoil in universities in the 1960s. What many student activists were protesting in that period, apart from a criminally waged war in

Vietnam, was really the capitulation both of the natural and the social sciences in their universities to an increasing link that had grown during the cold war between the intellectual pursuits of these disciplines on the one hand and the interests of governments and the corporations that governments by and large serve in the United States, Europe, and countries such as Canada and Australia. This subservience of the academy had the effect not only of turning the most highly funded research in these fields towards profit-oriented ends, nor only of turning many scholars into aspiring advisers to the prince, or those in power, but, even when not worldly in this debased sense, the equally striking effect of almost completely evacuating in research and in the curriculum, the conceptual, the historical, and, above all, the value-oriented aspects of the social and natural sciences. (The great excitement generated by the publication of Thomas Kuhn's book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in this period flowed from the fact that it reminded us just how much values, and politically and socially normative and institutional considerations in particular, affect the otherwise illusory appearance that science is a value-free form of inquiry.) What all this did to the Humanities is of no small importance.

One way to understand the very specific kind of centrality that English and Comparative Literary studies came to have in the decades after the 1970s is that they began to pick up the slack created by this abdication by the social sciences of the value-oriented aspects of their disciplines. Questions of identity based on race and gender and sexual preference that came to dominate literary intellectual pursuits and the rise of politically driven 'cultural studies' were all symptoms of this recovery within 'Criticism' of what was being ignored by the social sciences.

Let me illustrate the point with a very specific and pertinent example. Something like this, I believe, explains the great interest generated in these recent decades by the work of Edward Said.

It should have been obvious to anyone that there is no understanding a vast variety of phenomena in modern and contemporary political economy (and society, more broadly) without coming to serious grips with the fact and long history of colonialism and its effects. But no Economics department made central, or really even passing, reference to colonialism in its curricular or research agendas. Nor do they now, with only the rarest of exceptions.

It took an exiled Palestinian literary critic who was moved by one of the few persisting colonialisms of our own time in his own land to bring to the attention of the Western academy the general importance of imperialism in shaping a wide variety of phenomena that the social sciences should have taken within their stride.

Their refusal to do so put Said's work on the map, a map perused by all of the Humanities and by many frustrated and marginalized social scientists imprisoned in the narrow strictures of their discipline. (I should not exaggerate the point since I think some of Said's main ideas had – long before him – surfaced in the field of Anthropology in the work of those who criticized some of anthropology's assumptions when it travelled into distant fields for its research. But Anthropology has never had a central place in the social sciences in a way that English has in the humanities, and these critical attitudes needed that more conspicuous platform to catch fire.)

A further reason for the dominance of English in the Humanities is that it became a hospice for philosophical interests that went beyond the mostly arcane philosophical analysis that was done in Anglophone Philosophy departments. I don't mean to suggest that what is done in these departments should not be done. Nobody should be deprived of being interested in interesting things. It is the overwhelming dominance of these remote forms of analysis at the cost of excluding other broader philosophical pursuits that I am lamenting.

For centuries, the subject of philosophy was entirely continuous with natural science and the study of political economy, politics, history, and intellectual history. But in the last many decades ever since the subject has been turned into a *profession* in universities, the careerism that this generated had the effect of making philosophy stand apart as a site of jobs with its own self-standing topics done in independence from the knowledge pursued and provided in other departments in the university; as a result Philosophy self-consciously developed its own irrelevance to the point now that hardly anyone reads the work of the central fields of analytic philosophy (metaphysics and epistemology, for instance) except for analytic philosophers. I don't know of any subject in the Humanities and Social Sciences that are only read by their own practitioners. Historians read political scientists, sociologists read economists, but it is rare that anyone reads most of analytic philosophy except for other analytic philosophers. (A few exceptions like Rawls simply serve to prove the rule.) This will no doubt ensure that the few jobs there are in analytic philosophy in universities will be preserved for those doing that subject exclusively, uncontaminated by a knowledge of and interest in other disciplines; but this 'professional' development at the same time has ensured that this is a coterie discipline, with little reach of the sort it once had into public life and the variety of knowledges that ground public life. It is sometimes thought that Philosophy today *does* reach out to inform itself of psychology and cognitive science and natural science and so there is, after all,

intellectual traffic between these disciplines. But the sad fact is that the traffic is all one way (again with a very few exceptions that serve to prove the rule). Philosophers may read and know some of these sciences, but hardly any scientists in those areas read these philosophers.

Such efforts as there are to make philosophy extend itself to a range of issues of public concern, therefore, tends once again to be done in the thematic refuge that is provided by English Departments.

Now, of course, we all ought to be grateful that a subject like English has stepped in to, as I put it above, pick up the slack created by the narrowing turn taken in the social sciences and philosophy, but a question arises as to whether this is an entirely healthy development since, at least prima facie, it would seem that it is not very likely that a subject's wider relevance and its reflective concern for questions of value that affect its ideas, will be best pursued at a site so remote from its natural home.

Grateful as we must be to English, we cannot help noticing that the study of colonialism, to take one example, or of the issues of power and value as they affect our knowledge of society, would be better done if they were done rigorously by those more knowledgeable of political economy and politics and sociology, and more trained in philosophical analysis than literary scholars. Yet things have not turned out that way. Deprived of their natural home they are valiantly and generously, if often sloppily, pursued in a department, which is not their natural setting.

The dilemma here is vexing. On the one hand (horn) the social sciences and philosophy impoverish themselves and leave it to the Humanities and English and 'cultural studies' in particular to pursue aspects of their disciplines that reach wider than what is allowed by the quantitative and the arcanely analytical methods they have allowed to entirely dominate their subjects. And on the other hand, when these wider themes are taken up at a site so distant from their natural place, they are unsurprisingly very often pursued with a lack of rigour and a lack of full and knowledgeable understanding of the detailed issues at stake.

It takes a little reflection to notice that this dilemma is a symptom of much larger tendencies of modernity in which science came to be understood in a dichotomous relation with the humanistic disciplines, to the detriment of both. In a recent article protesting the critique of 'scientism' by humanists, Steven Pinker (2013) urges – sensibly enough – that humanists would do well to keep science, its methods and its results, constantly in mind as they address their own questions. There is no gainsaying that. It should be a banality. But the

article shows little understanding of how much scientism in the social sciences was in fact *responsible* for the creation of the dichotomy he wants to rightly undermine. He describes those who think that there are no questions about the world (natural and social) that natural science cannot eventually tackle as 'lunatic'.

But that position is not a lunatic fringe position of our time. It is a widespread outlook that has slowly congealed around both natural and social science (I emphasize that it is an *outlook* around science, not science itself) and it came to *define* 'nature' itself as 'that which the natural sciences study', thereby evacuating nature of all value properties. It is this outlook that is called 'scientism', and I daresay it is a *superstition of modernity*. By superstition, I mean that we take it on trust even though nobody knows when it was proved and certainly no one knows how it helps one to live better. So widespread is the superstition that the natural sciences have full coverage of nature (by full coverage of nature, I don't mean that natural science has succeeded in explaining all the properties of nature, but rather that it is considered the business of natural science to seek to explain all the properties of nature) that if one were to deny it, one would often be described as 'unscientific'.

But this is a grotesque non sequitur. One can only be unscientific if one contradicts some proposition in some science. And no science contains the proposition that science has full coverage of nature.

The outlook has had a tremendous effect on the nature of disciplinary pursuits in the academy as well as on public life generally – that is to say, on politics, political economy, and the environment. I won't in a short opinion piece try and elaborate how this is so, but I will say this: it is smug and shallow to say that scientism is not all that bad on the grounds that humanistic concerns should be informing themselves of science. Of course humanistic concerns should be informed by science, but if they are not it is at least partly because natural and social scientific concerns came to be understood with an imperviousness to a wide range of properties of value, meaning, and power, which set up an abiding dichotomy between science and the Humanities – and whatever it is that resolves and removes this dichotomy, it will not be scientism, at least not the scientism that *created the problem in the first place*.

So to conclude and summarize these brief remarks: The literary Humanities and so-called 'cultural studies' today do far too much of what the Social Sciences and Philosophy should be doing and were the Social Sciences and Philosophy to return to doing it in a broad and humane (rather than scientistic) re-configuration of their disciplines,

the literary Humanities could return to being their intellectual partners in what might emerge as a coherent and rational disciplinary layout in our academic lives – exploring within their rightful domain the substantial issues that emerge in literature and art and culture, but informed, as Pinker advises, by the methods and results of the natural and social sciences, so reconfigured.

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2 Re-defining the humanities

Place, meaning, function

Supriya Chaudhuri

In the twenty-first century, it is worth reminding ourselves that the definition of the humanities with which we have been accustomed to work is a loose collection of attributes and disciplines derived from Cicero's notion of the *studia humanitatis*, added to by centuries of 'liberal arts' practice and pedagogy. Both have their roots in the Western academy, and in a certain idea of the 'university' as well as the 'universal'. Within that institution, the concept of 'humanism' itself has come under attack, though the definition of the humanities disciplines has remained largely uncorrected. For us in our century, at our place and time, it is necessary to ask what the 'humanities' disciplines are, what function they perform, whether it is necessary to dismantle them, and what their future is. In this chapter, I will look briefly at the relation of the humanities with the human, and ask whether we need to make the definition of the 'humanities' broader or more restrictive.

I will focus particularly on the fact that the 'human' itself is a complex collection of ideas, none of them unchallenged in a philosophical climate sometimes described as 'post-human'. I will ask whether we should accept the lazy interpretation of the humanities as the 'non-mathematical' disciplines, or whether we need to investigate the term itself more closely. This will bring in the relation of the humanities with the liberal arts, which traditionally included the sciences. For it would clearly be a mistake to attempt a re-definition that simply widened or narrowed the scope of the term without actually asking questions of the disciplines that, for good or ill, have generally been thought to fall under this label. That is, it is not a terminological problem that we have to solve, though the term has a history: what we're addressing is the question of what we should read and why, and how knowledge is constituted.

One might even say that the terminological problem by itself would be trivial, and of course that term (trivial) has a history too, one

connected to the history of the humanities. In early modern Europe, the *studia humanitatis ac litterarum* (a phrase used by Cicero in his oration *Pro Archia*) (Ciceronis 1966: 3) came to be reduced to the first part of the liberal arts, those taught in the *trivium*, that is, grammar, logic, and rhetoric, as opposed to the more advanced disciplines of the *quadrivium*, that is, geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy. (The modern sense of the word trivial, for which Shakespeare is at least partly responsible, derives from this sense of juvenile pursuits). But Cicero himself, when he referred to the study that pertains to humanity, or, as he repeatedly suggests, forms one towards being human, did not exclude what we would, today, call the sciences. In fact, he seems to have viewed the whole of classical education as covered by this term. In *De re publica*, he cites a story told by 'Plato, or someone else', to the effect that after a storm had thrown him up on a deserted shore, he glimpsed geometric patterns on the sand and called out to his companions to be of good cheer, for he had seen the signs of men (Ciceronis 2006: # 1.29). Language and mathematics, then, figure equally in this classical view as being characteristically the property of human beings, and the universe of letters comprehends all those human arts by which, Cicero says, we come to know the infinity of things and of nature.

The reduction of the *studia humanitatis* to mean the arts of language alone took place during the Renaissance – which, when we were students, was called the victory of the *trivium* over the *quadrivium*. Not only did the profession of *umanista*, the teacher of the humanities disciplines of rhetoric and dialectic, emerge in late medieval universities, but the early Italian humanists – Coluccio Salutati, Pierpaolo Vergerio, and Leonardo Bruni – consciously re-defined the *studia humanitatis* in the interests of a new pedagogy, focusing on the study of poetry, history, moral philosophy, and the best models of Latin style. It was this that led to a split between the arts of language and those based on mathematics or physical observation. Galileo, at the start of another decisive shift in intellectual territory in the seventeenth century, went on to assert that mathematics is the language in which the book of nature is written (Galilei 1957: 238). I will not go into the long and complicated history of how, subsequently, the notion of the humanities comes to be still further reduced with the self-definition of the 'social sciences' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the end of this process, after the sciences and the social sciences had been taken away, the humanities, which had originally contained all of these, was the remainder, if not the dangerous supplement.

Re-defining the humanities appears then to have been a silent and continuous process, one that has worked to narrow and reduce the term's coverage. It was this reduced version that was introduced to the colonial university, and promoted at the cost of the sciences (even before the self-separation of the social sciences), in the interests of producing that clerical class necessary for a fully operative colonial bureaucracy. It has even been suggested that colonial liberal arts education, emphasizing subjects like English literature, was consciously promoted (to use Gauri Viswanathan's phrase) as a 'mask of conquest' (Viswanathan 1998). We may recall Rammohan Ray's letter to the Governor-General, Lord Amherst, on 11 December 1823, urging that the natives of India be instructed in 'Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful Sciences', in 'a college furnished with the necessary books, instruments and other apparatus'(Roy 1973: 433–436). So far as we know, the appeal went unheard. Theoretical and experimental sciences were not emphasized in the colonial curriculum (which also ignored the empirical and critical strands of pre-colonial culture), though reformers like Vidyasagar continued to press for their inclusion, and scientific textbooks were produced in Indian languages from the mid-nineteenth century. As most historians have noted, science education was very much the product of a nationalist endeavour. In 1872, Mahendralal Sarkar proposed the foundation of an Indian Association of Science, and a searing critique of colonial power infuses Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's endorsing of this venture in a Bangadarshan essay published soon after (Chattopadhyay 2004: 951–956). The Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science was ultimately founded by Mahendralal Sarkar and Father Eugene Lafont in 1876, and the National Council of Education, with its emphasis on technical training, in 1906. This is part of a larger history of nationalist investment in science, of which another signal instance was the foundation of the Indian Institute of Science in 1899 through the active efforts of Sir Jamsetji Tata and the Maharajah of Mysore. Post-Independence, as we are all aware, there was a planned investment in scientific and technological education, and a degree of radical ferment in some of the social sciences, such as history and economics.

By contrast, the 'humanities', an unexamined place-holder for other liberal arts disciplines, such as literature and philosophy, were largely neglected and ignored. It is worth recalling that these areas had already been undermined by the traumatic break with pre-colonial knowledge-systems instituted by the colonial university itself. What Lord Curzon described as 'the cold breath of Macaulay's rhetoric' had indeed laid its chill blight on literary studies in Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, and other

classical and modern languages in India, while philosophy, struggling to reconcile contrary methodologies and persuasions, faced a real dilemma of practice. It is important to remind ourselves of this crisis, since its gravity is often obscured by the tremendous wealth of new literature in the modern Indian languages, by the energy of social and religious reform movements and by nationalist politics from the nineteenth century onwards. In some parts of India, notably Bengal, there was even talk of a Renaissance: yet there was little by way of a revival of classical learning (despite some important contributions from Orientalist philology) in the colonial universities, largely devoted to the study of British literature and the thought-systems of the European enlightenment. Whether this was good or bad is not the issue: arguably, classical learning carried with it religious and social baggage that the project of 'modernity' needed to discard. It is impossible from our vantage-point today to wish away this history, or to dismiss its real achievements in social and political thought and new literary work (also, perhaps, insufficiently represented in university curricula). Nevertheless, a humanities education in India carried with it a sense of vacuum, a kind of disciplinary lack.

In fact no one seemed to be very sure what the humanities were: when I was at school, under the streaming system that picked children out to be engineers or doctors (or, as a soft option, nuclear physicists) as early as thirteen, the 'humanities stream' was an option for the lazy or unfit; the more ambitious pursued commerce if they couldn't get into science. In addition to three compulsory languages (English, Sanskrit, and a regional tongue), history, logic, sociology, economics, civics, home science, and geography were all taught to 'humanities' students at my high school. At university, there was more specialization, but the Arts Faculty still embraced the social sciences, and indeed I would say that it is difficult to think of a humanities curriculum that excluded all traces of 'social sciences' such as history and sociology. So what, precisely, are the humanities in our universities, and where are they? Are the humanities, in the reduced view, simply languages (but not linguistics), literature, and philosophy: or can they, tentatively, even surreptitiously, contain the social sciences before they become too scientific? Do they have a place, or are they simply a placeholder for the undefined other of science and technology, or of 'professional education' that prepares the ambitious towards careers in law and business? It is worth noting here that the 'two cultures' debate in the Indian academy (unlike the situation in England described by C. P. Snow in his 1959 Rede Lectures) does not contrast the urbanity and culture of humanists with the social awkwardness and obscurity

of scientists: rather, science, medicine, and technology, however little understood, have been granted extraordinary social prestige, even a kind of glamour that casts humble humanists into the shadow.

I have no desire to enter into the politics of this debate in the Indian academy, though that politics is one in which we are all involved and cannot forget. In our teaching lives, the territorial war (a losing battle in which the 'humanities' appear to have long given up hope and retired to tend to their ragtag, untrainable millions of 'general' students) has been largely fought between the Arts Faculty and those of Science and Engineering, though of these, the Science Faculty has only recently woken up to the fact that it too has a problem, with the basic sciences losing ground even to non-subjects like journalism, and a crisis in science education matching, perhaps exceeding, any perceived crisis in the humanities. But the ground has been shifting, too: globally as well as nationally. I would like to recall here the novelist J. M. Coetzee's foreword (written in the form of a letter) to a book by John Higgins, his colleague at the University of Cape Town, on *Academic Freedom in a Democratic South Africa*. Coetzee writes from the perspective of an international crisis, one that calls the survival of the university into question:

> All over the world, as governments retreat from their traditional duty to foster the common good and reconceive of themselves as mere managers of national economies, universities have been coming under pressure to turn themselves into training schools equipping young people with the skills required by a modern economy.
> (Coetzee 2013: 2)

The managerial ethos and the emphasis on marketability that modern universities appear to endorse is one that spells the end of what John Henry Newman had called 'knowledge its own end'. For Higgins, the humanities alone can offer a means of escape from the trap of short-term goals and unexamined assumptions:

> You argue – cogently – that allowing the transient needs of the economy to define the goals of higher education is a misguided and short sighted policy: indispensable to a democratic society – indeed, to a vigorous national economy – is a critically literate citizenry competent to explore and interrogate the assumptions behind the paradigms of national and economic life reigning at any given moment. Without the ability to reflect on ourselves, you argue, we run a perennial risk of relaxing into complacent stasis.

> And only the neglected humanities can provide a training in such critical literacy.
>
> (ibid., xii)

Yet Coetzee doubts that the modern university can surmount these challenges, in the face of what he describes as a sustained ideological assault, from the 1980s onwards, on all forms of critical thinking – especially those kinds of radicalism that had led, in the 1960s and 1970s, to a 'critique of Western civilisation as a whole'.

> The campaign to rid the academy of what was variously diagnosed as a leftist or anarchist or anti-rational or anti-civilisational malaise has continued without let-up for decades, and has succeeded to such an extent that to conceive of universities any more as seedbeds of agitation and dissent would be laughable.
>
> (ibid.)

In fact, as Coetzee sees it, the modern university has failed lamentably to resist the pressures exerted upon it by the state (and, one might add, by private capital). As a result, a certain phase of 'humanist' culture is now at an end, and no revival of the humanities is possible, simply because there are 'too few people left who really believe in the humanities and in the university built on humanistic grounds, with philosophical, historical and philological studies as its pillars' (ibid., xii). Sympathetic though he is to Higgins's dream of revival, he thinks it is unlikely: indeed he feels that if 'critical literacy' is Higgins's goal, it will be suggested by his opponents that this can be achieved simply by foundation courses in critical thinking, without a full-fledged 'humanities' program.

What Coetzee is saying, in his pessimistic way, goes much further than Higgins. He is suggesting that one needs to cultivate the humanities for their own sake, not for any immediate benefits that such study might bring. In the end, he tells his friend, you will have to say that 'we need free enquiry because freedom of thought is good in itself' (ibid., xiv). He puts his trust in the life of the mind, as an absolute good. And he cites the example of Polish universities under totalitarian rule, where, if one was not permitted to teach real philosophy, one would let one's students know that the philosophy seminar would be run in one's living room, outside the university. It may be necessary, he says, to take humanities outside the university in order to 'keep humanistic studies alive in a world where universities have redefined themselves out of existence' (3).

Coetzee has never been popular in South Africa, and this latest statement may not have gone down too well in a country which, like India, faces such severe problems in literacy, basic schooling, and access to higher education and employment that the dream of a Socratic academy functioning outside the state-funded system might appear hard to take. In India, too, it may seem a luxury to discuss the survival of the humanities in a climate where even the Right to Education Act, made law in 2008 after 60 years of shameful delay, has not ensured the access of all children to even the most rudimentary of classrooms. Yet, we should remember that it is that very act that will bring very large numbers of new young learners to our ill-equipped and inadequate universities, and it is all the more necessary, given that reality, to make sure that we understand what the academy has to offer them. For we cannot ignore the fact that the Nehruvian dream of an India empowered by scientific, medical, and technological education, a dream that directed our post-Independence investments in these fields, has produced terrible imbalances – from which we are yet to recover. Nor can we assume patronizingly that vocational and technical training will be enough: though such training is vital, and neglected, and requires much more by way of facilities and resources. In fact, this is exactly the time when we need to ask what the place of the humanities is in our universities, and what these humanities are. I suggest that this is all the more important at a time of crisis for the public university, when privately funded higher education is making serious inroads into our economy.

In early January 2014, I attended a conference in Bangalore, grandly called 'The Future of the Liberal Arts', at which chancellors and presidents of at least six US universities were showcasing their model of a liberal arts curriculum to the Indian academy. Present to receive this gift (or commodity) were the vice-chancellors of a number of new private universities in India, and much was said there about the 'liberal arts' model as the means of resolving the dichotomy of the humanities and the sciences, and creating well-rounded individuals who could justly enjoy the fruits of India's coming prosperity. Much was said in criticism of early specialization and the failure of the Indian university system as a whole, most of it quite correct. Unfortunately, however, there was virtually no representation from India's vast, if inadequate, public university system, so that the US chancellors probably received quite the wrong impression of the state of play. There were only two representatives from state universities, myself from Jadavpur and an astrophysicist from Presidency University in Kolkata. He spoke in a panel on the sciences, I in one on the humanities, and I think we were

united in our sense that the problems within the Indian academy can only be addressed by looking at the foundations of our disciplines and how we understand them, not by simply importing another educational model. We were conscious, too, that the conference was being hosted by the Raman Research Institute, a state-funded research body that exemplifies the split between the university and the research establishment that took place post-independence and helped to further ghettoize general humanities and science teaching. But in view of the fact that new private universities (and it is worth noting their difference from the numerous earlier private universities which offered medical, engineering, or business management courses for vast fees) are making a serious bid to take over the 'liberal arts' field, and are in a sense re-inventing the humanities by including them in a mixed undergraduate curriculum, the public university needs to re-think their place and function.

Since the liberal arts – a term taken from the medieval university, where they were divided into the *trivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy [along with the sciences, in most contemporary definitions]), the undergraduate liberal arts curriculum in many US universities, on which these private institutions in India are modelled, holds out the promise of a 'humanities' education in the original Ciceronian sense. Unfortunately the promise is rarely realized, and there is insufficient evidence to show whether such courses will truly prosper in India. In my view, the public university cannot follow this particular example – or at least not immediately. Rather, it is worth learning from the fact that many public universities and research centres – central as well as state-funded – have accomplished path-breaking work in interdisciplinary fields, and created new areas of study, courses, and working groups. The time seems right to propose, to the Indian academy in general, the pursuit of the 'new humanities'.

The 'new humanities' is a term that has just acquired currency and is associated with initiatives and working groups located as far apart as MIT and the University of Rome (Roma Tre). At an uninformed level it has been understood as the humanities through digital tools and cultures: thus, simply another name for the digital humanities, which Amlan Das Gupta has discussed. Many reactions to such labelling are dismissive, and there is indeed a groundswell of hostility towards the digital humanities generally, particularly in the context of literature, which is my field. On the 2 May 2014, Adam Kirsch published a vigorous attack in the journal *New Republic*, titled 'Technology Is Taking Over English Departments: The False Promise of the Digital

Humanities' (Kirsch 2014). Let us leave it to others to deal with these promises, false or otherwise. What I would like to suggest is that 'new humanities', properly considered, might be a way of rethinking the relation between science, art, and philosophy, and allow us to re-define and re-instate the humanities.

The new humanities are nothing if they are not a reconsideration of the relation between human beings and the world. The question before us, 'the place of the humanities', can only be addressed by looking again at what we mean by 'human', and how we understand this term in relation to other constituents – living and non-living – of our universe. As we all know, the idea of the human and the ideology of humanism have been almost continuously under attack for a couple of centuries, long before Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism'. In Western intellectual discourse, it is arguable that the overvaluation of the human that accompanies the Renaissance – and propels the rediscovery of the classical *studia humanitatis*, or humanities – is accompanied by a painful sense of the limits and contradictions of the human condition. This is evident even in what might be regarded as the most signal achievement of the new philosophy, the 'scientific revolution' of the seventeenth century. On the one hand, mind is separated from matter, human from animal, and animal from machine: on the other, these separations lead to a real loss of confidence in the human subject as such. In *The Open: Man and Animal*, Giorgio Agamben invokes Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism' and its detaching of man's *humanitas* from his *animalitas* in explicitly re-opening the question of man and of 'humanism'. 'In our culture', he writes,

> man has always been thought of as the articulation and conjunction of a body and a soul, of a living thing and a *logos*, of a natural (or animal) element and a supernatural or social or divine element. We must learn instead to think of man as what results from the incongruity of these two elements, and investigate not the metaphysical mystery of conjunction, but rather the practical and political mystery of separation. What is man, if he is always the place – and at the same time, the result – of ceaseless divisions and caesurae?
>
> (Agamben 2002: 16)

Agamben's concern in that philosophical treatise is with the distinction between human and animal (a distinction as important to Descartes as it was to Heidegger). In our post-human condition, we have, I will suggest, gone beyond that distinction as it was classically

proposed, so that it makes little sense to speak of the study of the humanities as 'forming us towards being human'. Rather, we are aware that our humanity – such as it is – is a condition of profound dependence on the other constituents of our world, so that we are not human in and for ourselves, but by and for others. So if there is a set of disciplines called the humanities, they should enable us to ask questions about the interdependence of animals, humans, and machines, indeed of the connectedness of the entire natural world and our activity within it as agents and as receiving subjects. Historically, the disciplines of human knowledge have emerged through a belief that our skills of language and mathematics – one enabling us to narrate a story, the other enabling us to see a pattern – were all that stood between us and our vulnerability and our mortality, all that enabled us to reflect upon and engage with the processes of time and change. Indeed it was this 'foldedness' in language that turned us round to face our past, as Rilke says in his eighth Duino Elegy.

There was a certain hubris (certainly the ideology of humanism was in its time extremely hubristic) in believing that human beings were therefore separate from the natural or animal world, of which they were in fact part, and that they could use it instrumentally and objectively. To ground the *studia humanitatis* in this notion of *humanitas* was a dangerous and ultimately untenable move, since it claimed for human beings not simply a distinct status, but a moral and intellectual privilege based on the self-love and prejudice of those making the claim. As many have pointed out, European humanism excluded slaves, women, children, people of colour, and many other categories of beings. But the humanities, as a set of academic disciplines that enable us to study the world, its objects, and our relation to it, can, and should, survive the death of humanism. Life for us is not just our life, but the lives of others, of other species and kinds, and it is also dependent, as it has never been to this extent, on technological adjuncts, on a kind of universal prosthetic supplement (particularly in the electronic domain). Traditionally the humanities have been focused on questions proper to the conduct of life, and these are questions of ethics, of sympathy, of communication, of *how we know* and *what we believe*.

These are universal questions, and the last two belong to the hard sciences as well. In fact it is from the hard sciences that we learn a certain technique of asking questions and proving answers, which is not irrelevant to the humanities *per se*. But the humanities enable us to ask the hard questions about justice and freedom, and to ask them in a way that recognizes the brevity and uncertainty of life. Indeed we cannot ask these questions in isolation from – say – a mathematical

conception of equality, or an economist's notion of freedom. I would like to suggest that our lives today, as individuals, as political beings, as users of technology, as role-players, make it impossible to consider literature, philosophy, the arts, history, sociology (the 'humanities' disciplines) as sealed off into their linguistic or discursive compartments. Rather, to study one is to be touched by all. This is not to suggest that we can achieve, in our university departments, a condition of full interdisciplinarity that is the nature of the 'new humanities'. Life is short, memory is inadequate, knowledge is imperfect. What I am suggesting, rather, is that older humanities disciplines allow themselves to be transformed from within – as they are already doing to a considerable extent – to acknowledge the relation, say, of philosophy with biology, literature with ethics, and so on.

In J. M. Coetzee's 2003 novel *Elizabeth Costello* (which overlaps with *The Lives of Animals*, published in 1999, and *Slow Man*, published in 2005), an aging woman writer travels around the world giving talks, not on literature, but on vegetarianism, philosophy, language, sexuality, and evil. Deliberately, Coetzee breaks open the format of the novel in order to put questions to society, law, custom, and morals. It is as though – like the Polish philosophy lecturers he mentions in his 2013 essay – he is trying to take the subjects that interest him out of the generic straitjacket of the novel and release them into the network of connexions, of actions and reactions, that make up what we think of as the 'human' mind. I would like to think of the new humanities – covering topics ranging from human ecology to statistical probability in plot-construction to censorship, as ways of receiving and processing knowledge, putting facts to question, understanding what things are. The new humanities are impossible without the co-operation of science and technology, but they are – in so far as such divisions can be made – a distinct field of study, in that they offer space for reflecting on the pursuit of life itself and how we can live more attentively, paying more heed to the conditions by which our lives become possible at all.

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3 The place of humanities

P. K. Mukhopadhyay

The place humanities has in a university is closely related to its place in (some) men's personal and social life. In a society dominated by the modern ideology of progress and the conception of knowledge as power humanities cannot be expected to have the place it had or would have in a society marked by a different ideology of progress and a different conception of knowledge. Moreover even in an otherwise flat society and culture humanities may turn out to be an indispensable tool of the vertical growth of a person besides being a necessary component of the horizontal social growth. Further the place of humanities in a university tells us as much about the state of the subject as about the state of the university in question. Considerations such as these have shaped our views in the matter being presented below. For us the most important question is not what place university accords to humanities but what place the informed academicians and the right thinking men in society accord to such a university.

It seems necessary to begin with a few prefatory remarks. It is the final version of the presentation the author made in the seminar on 'The Place of Humanities in University', which Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) organized in Delhi during 13–15 January 2014. The participants of that seminar would find that the thoughts presented there have been thoroughly recast. Secondly, as told then, the subject of the discussion is vast and can be discussed only briefly within the length of a paper. However, adequate notes and references have been provided to compensate for the extreme brevity and as a guide to a fuller treatment. The topic being what it is the natural context of its discussion cannot but be the current state of education and education system. It must have been noted by all discerning individuals that there was never a time in human history when people were not critical about the education current in their society. Still, they

must have also noted, in every age there were born in every society, celebrated teachers and scholars who made us proud and indebted. Education manifested in the life of these men, in their thinking and activities, is likely to tell us a different story than the one which gets wide publicity when we have a whole community of concerned professionals of both the local and global human society at large to consider. The popular views on education related matters such as the present one are often informed by lack of understanding and or non-academic considerations including economic or political ones. This makes things quite complicated. Anyway, there is a popular view of the matter as well as a more authentic but less known view. Sometimes the popular view is largely if not exclusively negative and ends up with pessimism which contends that where everything is rotten it is idle to cry spilt milk. However, a creative and committed discussion of the matter presupposes a right blend of optimism and realism and is informed by the hope that the discussion will prove to be useful for appropriate work agenda to be adopted by concerned bodies to improve the state of things related to the place of humanities in university. One who is a realist or an optimist is committed to believing that the possibility of improvement is never exhausted.

It is also to be noted that in matters like the present one the popular view consists of talks in vague generalities. In order to avoid that, and also in consideration of the way modern India was born and progressed, we, in our discussion, may have to keep in view the place of humanities both in Indian and non-Indian societies. Our discussion will turn out to be a discussion of mainly the relative place of humanities, and not its absolute place, in society or university. Even so, anything said about humanities as a whole is bound to be general and there is always the risk that what is said may not be equally true of each one of the branches of it. Philosophy is unlikely to be accorded the same place in university as economics, or even linguistics, say, just as physics does not enjoy the same place as sociology. Partly because of this reason we will more often contrast philosophy with physics. Another difficulty is that to say anything about humanities subjects in general or as a whole we need to know and state the principle used (at least in the present context) to collect all the diverse subjects that are referred to by the common name *humanities*. The term today does not mean exactly the same thing to refer to which the term was originally coined. So far it is not possible to totally avoid the perspective of history in our discussion. However, we do not envisage producing a mere historical and descriptive account of the place of humanities in universities; that

does not seem to be expected either. We cannot avoid discussing some of the important conceptual issues that are involved here.

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In so far as the present theme – 'The Place of Humanities in University' – gestures towards it, the problem of relative position of humanities seized the mind of people in Europe during the post–World War days.[1] The same or similar problem was raised and thoroughly debated in India, and more particularly in Bengal,[2] between 1900 and 1906 (Mukhopadhyay 2014b). The problem did not remain confined to academic institutions only; it became a socio-cultural concern among, at least, the urban, educated and elite population. This will seem quite natural in view of the fact that man is a cultural being and both universities and humanities are human creations. In one sense the (present) place of humanities in universities is a fact rather than a problem; it is to be empirically ascertained and recorded rather than debated. In another sense it is a problem to be first understood and then suitable work agenda are to be adopted to address the problem. The two are not unrelated in that a fact is brought about by certain conditions that are often contingent. Besides, what one recognizes or fails to recognize, as a fact of a sort is determined to some extent by the background beliefs of the person in question.

Many will agree that it is a fact that humanities occupy (especially today and in India) a low position in university. From this common starting point, different persons may move in different directions. Some may feel that it is urgently needed to improve the situation and suggest or implement some concrete measures. Some other may feel that the current situation is as it should be; there is no reason why humanities should have any better position today. For them the matter ends here and there is nothing more to do, no action is called for. Others who would like to proceed more slowly and cautiously would insist on clarifying the situation and a number of related questions – thereby ensuring that we do not argue at cross purposes. First, can we determine if there is any real issue and what is the nature of it? How and by which criterion the place of a subject is determined in universities or in society? It may be asked whether the place of humanities in university is a reflection of its place in society or just the other way round. Did humanities hold a higher and better position earlier?[3] If so, why? Are we expected to discuss the absolute position of humanities or its relative position only; if the latter then relative to which other subject or subjects?

In British India, universities were first established in 1857. It may be deemed natural and convenient to fix the year 1947 as the end point of

the first phase of the history of university education in India. Accordingly the second phase ranges from 1947–48 to 2014. This is a very broad division and each segment needs to be further subdivided as and when necessary. For example, reference to what happened between 1811 and 1857 is crucial for understanding what shape education took in British India and why, and, further, who shared the responsibility. Lest people say that such details are unimportant and irrelevant we would like to mention only one thing. By 1880 the newly introduced Western style university education came under severe criticisms from people both within and outside India (Mukhopadhyay 2014b). If we and particularly the leaders of free India were explicitly aware of these and addressed them seriously then the state of education in India could have been much better than what it is now. We not only failed to take note of these criticisms but also forgot how the leaders of India during the education reform movement of early twentieth century responded to those. They took many concrete steps from revising syllabi to establishing many national academic institutions; voiced the need for national university;[4] formulated the philosophy of education adequate for individual and society. Their conception of the place of humanities in university and society is vindicated, as we will show later, by some recent survey findings in OECD countries. These leaders insisted on, among other things, the need to ensure that education had its roots in the national ethos and culture.[5] Instead of starting from where the predecessors left and making further progress, we often repeat (perhaps unknowingly) just what they said, long before, was necessary to do (Mukhopadhyay 2014b).

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We feel the need to include here a very brief account of humanities and some other related notions. This may be deemed quite unnecessary for my colleagues and scholars in academic profession. However, we cannot presuppose the knowledge of the matter in case of all readers; and further it is desirable that the paper should be self-complete. Most of the words like university, education, humanities have different meanings and they are often used ambiguously. We need to state explicitly the senses in which we use the expressions here. The word *university* has many different, though not necessarily unrelated senses.[6] In India it took fifty-seven long years for the university to become a regular teaching institution from a merely examining body. But from the first day of its establishment it was in charge of maintaining the standard of education in the region. In the post-independence India the responsibility came to rest with an autonomous institution which was also designed to maintain or ensure a uniform standard of education all

over India. We rarely stress or stress as much as we should the other most important function of a university. As back as in 1877 the chancellor of an Indian university, a foreigner, very fervently hoped that the university in India would become 'a learning body' for, as he believed, the "highest function of a University had, perhaps, no direct connection with instruction, . . . But was rather that of a great national reservoir for thoroughly original research, a provision for the extension rather than the diffusion of knowledge".[7] Independent India has either forgotten this idea or ideal of university, or under pressure of circumstances[8] universities have become primarily teaching and examining bodies. Absolute place of humanities in such universities cannot but be rather low.[9]

To turn to humanities now, on one extreme the expression carries no more sense than "the subjects taught in the university departments of humanities". Similar is the case with the expression science.[10] On the other extreme since 1959 at least science and humanities came to be widely viewed and talked about as two different cultures altogether (Snow 1959). Apart from these two extremes, though not unrelated to them, is the sense according to which humanities stands for certain specific courses of study which share among them one negative feature, namely they are different from certain other subjects which the term science covers.[11] This division is not as sharp or clear as we tend to think. This is particularly so if we remember that there are soft sciences and hard humanities. Today the distinction is overemphasized by the votaries of scientism who do not seem to be fully aware of the historical background of the distinction or such recent developments as greater awareness that there are exact humanities. For this reason also we need to note how the distinction between humanities and science emerged for the first time.

Often we are not very consistent or clear in our use of the expressions like liberal arts or education, humanities and humanism. Some may think they perhaps mean the same thing when they use humanism and humanities. Some other may think that there is no necessary connection between them. For, the term humanism was coined only in the nineteenth century but the expression *studia humanitatis*, of which the word humanities is a translation, is as old as ancient Rome; it is actually derived from Cicero. Those who give this argument do not consider the fact that though the term humanism was coined in the nineteenth century yet it was coined to describe certain state of things, phenomena and movements that belong to the period of European Renaissance. The same is true about the word *renaissance* itself. It was first introduced by Michelet in 1855, and it gained secure currency

when Burckhardt used it in the title of his work on Italian Renaissance. The historians coined the word to describe the great transformations of Europe between the fourteenth and late sixteenth century. Anyway, in one of its major senses humanism was an educational movement, in a very broad sense of the term, which witnessed the creation of a curriculum for the study of the classics which substantially informed Western education and remained its driving force until our own time. The current education system of India is essentially a system of Western education which was introduced for the first time in British India by the British rulers, of course, with the willing cooperation and assistance of many great Indians. Two important and related features of humanism are its secularism and naturalism. However, naturalism got much more stressed in modern times or at least in the age of modern science. Neither naturalism nor the conception of man associated with it is exactly the same in the modern scientific age and in the age of the European Renaissance. During the Renaissance period, secularism was more prominent. In fact scholars agree that the great transformation of European civilization during the fourteenth to the seventeenth century is marked by the secularization of its culture. What we call Indian Renaissance lacks many of the characteristics of European Renaissance; it even witnessed the emergence of liberal Hinduism, which is far from secular. However, as we have discussed elsewhere, humanists were not necessarily irreligious or anti religious people, and side by side the lay or classical humanism there also developed Christian humanism. What was common to both these forms of humanism was that they sought to recover or return to the pristine life and consciousness of the ancient people – the art, literature and learning of antiquity (or authentic Gospel, in case of the Christian humanism) unencumbered by the complexities and unnecessary sophistications of scholasticism of the Middle Age. It is of particular interest to us in the present context that the great humanists of the Renaissance Europe wanted to revolutionize the medieval curriculum: the driving force behind this project was the conviction that the classical world had a profound understanding of all aspects of human experience – moral, intellectual, emotional and imaginative – and that the great body of classical literature, including philosophical and scientific works, could form a stable basis for the enhancement of the human person.

This conception of education is to be set against the highly artificial education of the Middle Age dominated by scholasticism. Incidentally, the leaders of the National Education Movement in India were very much disturbed by the artificial character of the newly introduced Western education of the time (it is largely the same system which is

still continuing.) Another important point that we need to note is that the medieval scheme of the liberal arts was 'quite different in theory and practice' from the curriculum of *studia humanitatis*. The former comprehended both humanistic and 'scientific' subjects; it included rhetoric on the one hand and logic, mathematics and astronomy on the other, though not poetry or history. The educational scheme of antiquity which the Renaissance humanists recovered gave a central place to moral philosophy. Besides moral philosophy the humanistic curriculum emphasized literature and history but not mathematics or more technical and scientific branches of philosophy. It, however, kept room for such old subjects as grammar and rhetoric. Here we find for the first time the concept of a humanistic training as something distinct from and almost antithetical to a scientific and professional one. It has also been noted that however well intentioned this distinction or the awareness of it may otherwise be, it "proved to be a mixed blessing, at least to the extent that it fostered the notion that humane studies are somehow 'useless' or that the scientific and professional subjects are necessarily illiberal".[12]

All this comes very close to the credo of scientism (Mukhopadhyay 2014a: 144f) of our time which dominates the view of general public and seems to have quite some influence even on the academic professionals. Scientism seems to contend that humanities necessarily lacks rigour which makes up the very essence of science. We are seized by scientism, if not by the whole of it at least by a part or implication of it according to which the distinction between humanities and science is basically that between only hard science and soft humanities. It is not a big thing unless we generalize it illicitly. Nobody claims the same academic standard or status of literature and mathematical physics. Scientism may concede when pressed that there are also soft sciences but it does not seem to accept that there are or could be hard humanities.[13] We will note one last sense of humanities (and science) which is the oldest; it was sort of introduced by Socrates and is still alive. It gives us the most basic and stable sense of humanities. According to it humanities is the study of man and morals to which Socrates wanted men of his time to turn their attention. This shift from the preoccupation of the Ionian scholars with the study of nature appealed to Socrates because he thought the study of nature could not yield definitive knowledge but the study of man might. Against this background Descartes may be taken as reiterating Socratic insight when he found the most basic indubitable truth was the phenomenon of human consciousness. Since that time the division of human knowledge suggested by Socrates became firmer, science is the study of (external, physical)

nature and humanities the study of man. This is indeed very broad but it was never challenged in history either in the Middle Age or during the Renaissance. Retaining this core distinction we may fully develop the idea of humanities which will be appropriate today.

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Today there is a general consensus that in university the place of humanities is rather low. However, while some think it is deplorable others think it a blessing in disguise. We will return to it later. The question we must ask first, and which is not very easy to answer convincingly, is how one can determine absolute or relative position of a subject or group of subjects first in university, say? It seems easier to determine the relative position of a subject in university or society; we can use as criterion the popularity of the subject (or its opposite) among the students. However, it is not easy to measure this popularity. The number of students studying it or applying for admission in it at any given point of time is not always a sure proof of the popularity of a subject or group of subjects like humanities; otherwise we could say humanities today is more popular than science or technology. If however we take into consideration the number of applications for admission being rejected each year, then science and technology may turn out to be no less perhaps more popular than humanities. However, in so far as the number of *willing* (and adequately competent) candidates who get a chance to study the subject is dependent also on contingent and non-academic considerations like size of population of the society concerned and number of seats available in the university, etc. The eligibility criterion applied for admission in University will take us back to the state of education in schools and colleges but may not necessarily tell us much about the academic competence of the student population of the country in general. Again the current national need and the suitability of a subject to serve that need, may determine both the greater opportunities like the number of institutions offering the course and the total number of seats available. The current market value of a subject as measured by the market value of a degree in it counts more than the consideration of personal taste of the students or academic superiority of the subject concerned. There are many conflicting considerations also. If increasing number of students in humanities can be partly explained in terms of factors like huge population, democratization of education and absence of facilities of vocational training at the school stage or immediately thereafter, then limited job opportunity for pass outs in humanities acts towards keeping the number of students in university less than what it could otherwise be. The

popularity or unpopularity of a subject or group of subjects determined by criteria as above does not say necessarily or immediately anything about the academic worth of the subject. Though both of them may determine the place of humanities (or any other subject) in a university we need to keep distinct the inherent worth of a subject and such exterior considerations as job opportunities, etc. There are persons for whom the popularity or unpopularity of humanities in the sense just described does not weigh much. They think that the huge 'popularity' of humanities measured by greater number of students studying it is doing no less harm to the subject than its unpopularity determined by the criterion as above. Anyway, there does not seem to be any easy or quick solution to the problem, if the theme – place of humanities in university – gestures towards one. Many do not seem to think that the words 'the place of humanities in university' can be taken to signal towards any problem. They are convinced that humanities do not have a high position in university; it is a fact; and there is no good reason why it should have any better position.

On the contrary they are convinced by at least two good arguments why humanities should have a marginal position in university. They now offer these arguments to convince others. Both the arguments privilege, in their own different ways, science and prove the relative inferiority of humanities. The first argument – the argument from the contribution it makes to *human progress* – is quite general and does not seem to have much to do directly with the specific issue – the place of humanities or place of it in university. The second argument – the argument from the quality of knowledge it produces – seems to address the specific issue, has a more academic look about it and should count more with the academicians. The argument is that there is a qualitative difference between the knowledge which sciences produce and knowledge which humanities claim to yield. The latter is of a poorer quality; in fact it is only pseudo knowledge. In humanities not only no new knowledge is produced, but also and at the most the old truths are repeated. Real knowledge is produced by science alone. It is therefore quite natural that humanities has a very limited role, if any at all, to play in the university considered as a centre of higher research and extension of knowledge (rather than mere diffusion of it). The first argument runs something like this. The credo of knowledge for the sake of knowledge should not be misused to hide the uselessness of certain enterprise like humanities as it does not have anything to contribute to human progress. Man owes his progress exclusively to science. In a modern democratic country where society is responsible

for the maintenance and growth of it education must benefit society. And society benefits from science and not humanities.

Even if the two arguments – that humanities does not contribute to progress and that it does not produce knowledge proper – apparently differ in their respective scope, they come to use ultimately the same criterion. For, the value of science and hence of quality knowledge it is claimed to produce, lies in the fact, so it is often believed, that this knowledge contributes to human progress. It is to be noted that the force of these arguments derive as much from the conception of knowledge as from the conception of progress.[14] These two conceptions are closely related to each other and are among the defining features of modern age or particularly of modernity considered as a certain specific cast of mind. One who is explicitly aware of this point will be able to notice that often in their discussion on the place of humanities in university and in society, people implicitly assume these conceptions and thereby predetermine the conclusion that humanities deserves a lower or marginal position. These people also conveniently forget that humanities predates modernity and science.[15] One does not begin to understand, let alone solve the issue under reference, unless one discusses this cluster of ideas in their interrelationship keeping in mind the spatio-temporal framework in which they evolved or got combined. It has been rightly said that the idea which has dominated most the modern age is the idea of progress (Mazzeo 1969: 275). And this idea of progress itself is a modern idea. Every age had its own ideology of progress. According to the modern ideology of it, progress is gradual, continual (except for occasional and temporary setbacks), unlimited and linear. This is decisively a creed of hope and optimism which essentially characterizes, it is claimed, the scientific community today.[16] As to the means of this kind of progress, modern man is convinced that it will come through *human* effort.

> What sort of effort, after all, could achieve such an end? What sort of mechanism, so to speak, would encompass such a hope? The answer lay in *a new attitude* toward knowledge and its uses. The beliefs which complete the idea of progress state that man can achieve knowledge of nature such that he will gain power over its operations, that such knowledge and power have no discernible limits, and more important still, that the power to dominate nature and make it serve man will increase the happiness of mankind.
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> (Mazzeo 1969: 278, emphasis added)

It goes without saying that the modern age was initiated by the modern scientific revolution in Europe in the early seventeenth century. The medieval age and modern age was mediated by the period of renaissance and humanism during which the idea of humanities took shape. This idea as also certain parallel ideas of India of long antiquity are still valuable and useful, as we hope to be able to show. The need is there to examine more patiently, thoroughly and in an unbiased way, the issues involved. Accordingly we deem it quite in order to discuss or at least refer to two recent documents. The first one is a paper in which one of our scientist colleagues noted, analyzed and discussed, keeping the current Indian society in view, the report of certain survey conducted in the West (Bhattacharyya 2000). The second is the Review report prepared by two of our humanities colleague regarding the functioning of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (Miri and Bhargava 2010–11). It is needless to say that both these documents tell us something about the place of humanities directly or indirectly though they do not seem to tell the same or similar things.

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Often our study of the matter under reference tends to become generalizations based on selective approach. People will speak of the subject humanities in university with only such universities in mind as say, Oxford and Cambridge (Snow 1959). Some of them will have in mind only or primarily philosophy, and not many other subjects which come under humanities, when they speak of current failure or future prospect of humanities (See Quine 1981b: 193; Rorty 1999; Balslev 1991; Miri and Bhargava 2010–11). However, it makes lot of difference which university or universities one takes as representative and which view one has of that university (see particularly Leacock 1922 and Platt 1976). Within barely fifty years of their career, universities in India were found to be bad copy of some foreign university which itself was an academic institution of inferior quality.[17] Similarly in comparing science and humanities, people often have in mind such subject as philosophy.

Since there is general consensus that of all the subjects and courses of study coming under humanities failure of philosophy is most striking,[18] and since this piece is meant for an anthology of papers contributed to a seminar organized by Indian Council of Philosophical Research, it may be deemed normal if we spend relatively a little more time to discuss the place of philosophy in university (as also in society, and these two can hardly be separated completely).

The critics hold that if not all at least philosophy of all subjects coming under humanities is least useful in securing for us a better society. History and, even, literature, they find, are more useful than

philosophy.[19] Given this state of things, the first requirement is that we seriously try to find out the reason for the alleged failure of philosophy. Also we need to refresh our idea of philosophy and humanities and the relationship between them. We cannot afford to take it for granted that we don't need to refresh our understanding or bring to our *explicit* awareness what we mean by either university or philosophy. One reason for the poor shape of philosophy is said to be its isolation from other humanities subjects like history, linguistics, literature and so on.[20] If this is accepted, then the inevitable, at least natural, recipe for improving the condition of philosophy is to make philosophy work in combination with other humanities subjects. Apprehension is there that philosophy professionals are unlikely to accept this suggestion in the spirit in which it is offered or accept it very seriously, let alone take any initiative to move appropriate bodies to implement it. So it was suggested that government should take the initiative to bring together under one single council a number of humanities subjects including philosophy and promote higher research in them. This suggestion is as sincere as it appears to be, at least in the present circumstances, impractical. Those who made this suggestion were themselves aware that deeper thinking should precede the implementation of it. Generally speaking philosophy professionals do not seem to have done that though some have noted a number of points which are yet to be consolidated properly. First it may not be convincing that most of other subjects that come under humanities, like history, literature, linguistics (or perhaps even anthropology) are doing much better than philosophy. It is doubtless true that philosophy can gain much if it does not remain in isolation but interact with other subjects. But these other subjects need not be only other humanities subjects. Recent history quite clearly shows that philosophy gained no less from interacting with science than with theology. But just because philosophy needs it, it is unlikely that all humanities subjects (or science subjects as well) could be brought together under one council or that all or majority of academic professionals who represent these subjects would want it. Realistically speaking there is little prospect that appropriate initiative in this respect will be taken either by the government or by the academic community. We may have to find some different solution.

Real or natural development and transformation, whether of a subject or a society, can come only from within it and following its own inner dynamism and vitality. It cannot be imposed from outside. Whatever the case may be these points are needed to be thrashed out. We do not intend to do that directly here. But our exploration here of what vitality, if any, humanities have, may be deemed to be in continuation of the line of thinking of the scholars currently active in this

field.[21] In fact we would like to offer some general considerations why it will be beneficial not only for all branches of humanities but also for all branches of science if there prevails an atmosphere of not isolation or competition, but cooperation, mutual respect and critical appreciation. Why this happens more easily in the realm of science (Majumdar 1963) may be properly understood; and if possible, such understanding may be used to improving the conditions of humanities.

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It would be rather premature to become very pessimistic about humanities at this stage. It is yet to be proved that the current ranking of the subject is determined by some inherent deficiency of it. The reason for its decadence is to be searched elsewhere. There is no reason to be complacent about the position of science in university either. On the contrary, considering the greater number of more competent and willing, and hence authentic, teachers and students of science in our country, the subject is not developing as much as it should. This suggests that there is something not exactly what it should be so far as our conception of science, its true nature and status, as well as the scientific temper is concerned. To put it differently, the authentic scientific temperament and approach are yet to take its firm root in India.[22] Soon we will return back to it, but it is to be noted that our purpose is not to praise of blame anyone subject or its representatives but to understand the situation as objectively and thoroughly as possible.

Many factors other than the inherent merit or defect of it determine the place of a subject in university. One such factor which does not get sufficient attention is the *popular* view of the subject; the inauthentic impression about the subject on the part of the vast majority of general educated people. The failure of the professionals of a subject to foster the right attitude towards it[23] or right conception of it also plays its part. Neither the conception of social progress nor that of the progress of science or humanities is as clear as it should be even among the academic professionals. We proceed on the basis of our *intuitive* understanding of the matters without questioning its soundness or level of clarity. Anyway, what we think the place of humanities is in university at any given moment should crucially depend on the proper understanding and explicit awareness of these matters. We may as well illustrate this point with one example. We in India are more accustomed to thinking and speaking of the contrast between science and humanities (including philosophy) rather than their close cooperation. This is amazing. A major part of philosophy course in Indian universities consists of modern and contemporary Euro-American

philosophy. However, the teachers and students of this subject are rarely and explicitly aware that without adequate knowledge of the history of modern science we may not be able to do justice to this course as teachers (or even students). It is not an exaggeration to say that modern European philosophy emerged when its service was requisitioned or felt necessary to make the current (European) society safe for science and the scientists. Modern philosophy began as an epistemological project right from the time of Descartes (or even a little earlier) and it was completed by Kant when he came to the conclusion that the words science and knowledge were coextensive or inter substitutable. To put it more simply, the conclusion was that science and not philosophy was knowledge.[24] Between the two world wars, philosophy was declared to be a pseudo-science or pseudo-knowledge.[25] All this went in favour of science. But what it shows is that philosophy is an extremely self-reflective subject and it extended to science great and crucial cooperation without which science could not find a secure and safe place in society. Whether we are all aware of it or not, many know that today again there is need for close cooperation between science and philosophy.[26] It is a great challenge; for the current conception of science needs to be revised without compromising its rigour and depth (Penrose 1997). This urgency arises today from within science; it is being felt partly as a result of the development of quantum mechanics,[27] computer and neuro-sciences and consciousness studies.[28] While cooperating with science in both the spheres, the academic and the social, philosophy itself is making much progress since 1960s. For it, in its turn, got the opportunity for prolonged and intense self-reflection. Much deeper understanding of the nature and conception of philosophy has been gained. Outside Europe (and America), for example, in India, the study of modern European philosophy remained largely and truly the teaching and study of the *history* of it, largely because we are not explicitly aware of the socio-academic issues that shaped it and made its emergence necessary. These issues are decidedly the *natural* and *living* issues of Europe and the scholarly community there feels it to be so.[29] On the other hand, India's own philosophy was not given its due place in Indian universities and university education that came into existence, due partly to the nineteenth-century education reform movement in India.[30] University and university education became a part only of the life and experience of a few English knowing (English) educated urban elite (Bhattacharya, K. C. 1984). Many among these people could not, in spite of their initiation into emerging (religio-political) nationalism and patriotism of the time, secure adequate acquaintance with the classical Indian disciplines of

knowledge and the Sanskrit language in which these were couched. On the other hand, the authentic custodians of Indian systems of knowledge, the Pundits, who were available at that time in plenty, were left out not because they lacked knowledge or wisdom but because they did not know the English language.[31] Till at least the first half of the twentieth century knowledge of English was essential in Indian universities but the ignorance of Sanskrit was no disqualification. Many British personalities like Herbert Spencer found it absurd (Mukherjee and Mukherjee 2000: 8). Much later scholars like Karl Potter writes that contemporary philosophy professionals of India have lost their root in their own philosophy and, or because of that, are destined to remain alien to European philosophy. It is a fact that majority of Euro-American scholars today do not have time or taste to acquaint themselves with Indian philosophy – classical or cotemporary – nor are they ready to recognize the works of the philosophy professionals of India as contributions to *their* own philosophy even when majority of these Indian scholars teach exclusively Western philosophy and write on or about the issues of that philosophy alone.

Still there does not seem to be any legitimate ground for an Indian to think or say that we are destined to *remain* rootless. There is strong possibility of rediscovering Indian philosophy and making progress in it (and in philosophy in general). This can happen if a considerable section of philosophy professionals, in India in particular, thoroughly train themselves in classical Indian philosophy, take definite stand in it and care to respond, again authentically, to Euro-American philosophy, as a *living* tradition of philosophical thinking and not just as a branch of history. Introduction of English education in India made it a real possibility (largely unrealized even today). Such efforts would also lead not only to the progress in the form of new reconstructions wherever possible but also to inventing completely new materials. Some of our colleagues have preferred to take, instead of engaging themselves in some sort of an open debate with men like Potter[32] or adopting certain concrete and appropriate work agenda, an easy but wrong alternative course. They have been arguing[33] that the very division of philosophy into Indian and non Indian is wrong. However, they do not hesitate to send their papers for publication to journals like *Philosophy East and West* or extensively use the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards. Both in the body of the Encyclopedia and in its Introduction explicit distinctions have been drawn between Eastern and Western philosophy and between historical articles and articles on philosophical issues. The philosophy professionals, ICPR or educational administrators and policy makers in the governments in India

generally failed, for no convincing reason, to bring India's own philosophy to the mainstream of university education in India.

The true nature and distinctive conception of Indian philosophy remained largely unknown even among the educated Indians and to some extent among the philosophy professionals.[34] One reason is that these professionals prefer to depend much more on their instinct and intuition rather than honest toil of acquainting themselves first hand with the huge literature of Indian philosophy to arrive at their view about the true conception and nature of Indian philosophy. According to these scholars truly rational philosophical thinking in India was too early killed by spiritually or theologically oriented conservative thinkers (primarily the Vedantins but all other theistic thinkers as well) who somehow became dominant in society.[35] This view comes as strong endorsement of the view of many Western scholars (and perhaps some of their Indian pupils) that India did not develop a philosophy of her own (except perhaps the Carvaka or Bauddha thought). Whereas this view remains confined to few progressive and secular *intellectuals*, there is another view which is widely popular among both the lay and educated public in India and abroad as well as a good number of academic professionals. According to this second view, *the* representative philosophy of India is (advita) Vedanta, which emphasizes the spiritual unity of everything. The transcendental spiritual monism of this Vedanta and the belief that this is *the* philosophy of India come as strong endorsements of the Orientalist's picture of India as a mystical and spiritual culture. A section of liberal Hindus (often educated but lacking technical sophistication of professional academicians) is the jealous advocate of this second view. Knowingly or unknowingly both these groups contend that India as a matter of fact is a religious and or mystical culture. Whereas the first group deplores it, the second group celebrates it. According to the latter India is destined to be the teacher of the West. India's great message to the world is one of universal spiritual unity – a truth which alone can save the world from the imminent destruction that science or the materialistic scientific culture of the West is bent on bringing about on mankind.[36] Anyway, this picture of India as mystical culture is enshrined they say in the huge humanistic literature of India. India's humanities literature completely ignores the need of social progress and is basically responsible for India's all round – social, political, economic – backwardness from which India today is struggling to come out from, and with considerable success. India is achieving this success to the extent its leaders is turning her into a scientific and technological culture following the example and path of the modern West. These leaders never tire showering huge

verbal praises for the advocates of liberal Hinduism of recent past. In practice, however, they ignore India's spiritual humanities (or the version of it popularized by the two groups in their own different ways – by praising or blaming it).

It is high time that philosophy professionals of India take concrete steps to check the wrong impression being created and widely spread by these (and perhaps some other) groups. Knowingly or unknowingly, they are spreading the belief that Vedanta (and perhaps Buddhism) is *the representative* philosophy of India, that India is basically and truly a religio-spiritual mystical culture. This popular view of Vedanta or, which comes to the same thing, this *popular* Vedanta (or Buddhism) and of the Indian culture systematically ignores and marginalizes many highly analytical and sophisticated systems of Indian philosophical thought; and it tends to make us forget the actual truth that India is a *total culture* which accords due importance and value to rationality and spirituality. If at all there is any unique feature of Indian culture, it is this that according to it man can harmoniously and consistently pursue both intellectual and spiritual culture; her greatest spiritual heroes are at the same time intellectual talents.[37] Due to the preaching and influence of the above two groups India and the world are about to forget completely the systems like Samkhya, Nyaya, Mimamsa and others. The system of Arthasastra (the art and science of statecraft) as elaborated and presented recently (marking the near continuous growth of Indian traditions of thought) by a great Naiyayka, who was also an orthodox Hindu, is no exception.[38] Failures of the professional academicians and research councils, etc., in this regard are not allowing the correct conceptions of India's great contributions to the fields of philosophy, art, aesthetics, law, social studies, etc., to attract attention either of the general public or even of the greater section of educated population. Under the circumstances it is no wonder that humanities of India in particular is not given a high place in university. So far as humanities in general or Western humanities in particular is concerned, its low position is due to certain related but different reasons that involve a certain particular conception of progress and knowledge.

When we turn to science in order to fix the relative place of humanities we find that careful examination reveals that our view of the place of science in university and society is not based on the correct and objective study or understanding of the relevant facts; rather it is largely based on scientism – the popular and largely subjective belief about the nature and position of science. In the European or even global context, one component of the popular conception of science is that science

is the monopoly of modern Europe. We will not discuss this point here.[39] At the serious academic and theoretical level, Kant and later the logical positivists had shown in their different ways that knowledge is science and as distinct from it philosophy is not knowledge. How revolutionary is the thought? To understand that we need to refer to the widely spread belief, which is taken to be almost an axiomatic truth,[40] that modern European philosophy is the legacy bearer of early Greek philosophy and its development. The ruling conception of knowledge since at least the time of Socrates was that true knowledge could be had in the realm of philosophy and not in the realm of science. The same truth was partly reiterated by Descartes, who is known to be one of the founders of both modern (European) science and modern (European) philosophy. The two contrasting claims – knowledge is philosophy and knowledge is science – should have awakened us to the need for further clarification of the notions of science and philosophy in our own way before fixing the place of humanities (science) in university (taken it to be mainly a place of knowledge generation). Instead we make short of our job by largely accepting the clarification which the contemporary analytical philosophers, and little earlier the logical positivists, offered in terms of the distinction between factual knowledge and linguistic/conceptual knowledge.[41] That science is factual knowledge may not be as problematic (though it would be more accurate to say that it is knowledge of phenomena) as to limit facts to only those which current (natural) science studies – the natural things and events or the things and events of the natural, external and observable world. Accordingly it should also be seen as problematic to accept that philosophy yields only linguistic or conceptual clarity or just linguistic knowledge. On the other hand, science's undisputed claim to a high position derives much from its being the instrument of human progress whereas progress is understood to result from man's ability to control nature which in its turn comes from scientific knowledge alone for science alone studies nature or natural fact and yield knowledge of it. Socrates and Descartes after him contended that absolute certainty could not be had in our study of the *external* and natural world (which is now a common sense among at least the scientists, science and general academic professionals whether of science or humanities). We need to turn inward to study the human reality. Philosophy meant to the Greeks, since the time of Socrates, mainly the study of man and morals (as distinct from external physical objects). Knowledge as certain and true belief could be had only in this realm. Kant redefined the notion of certainty or universal and necessary truth, in such a way that it is obtainable only in the empirical or better the phenomenal

world. Given this clarification, it becomes an apodeictic truth that science is 'knowledge'. But it was beyond Kant's imagination that science could be held to be the *totality* of human experience as the advocates of scientism would want us believe. This ruling conception of science as derived from scientism, the popular conception of knowledge, and the dominant ideology of progress determine today in large measure the position of science and humanities in universities and society. The astute and sensitive scholars remain alert; they keep distance from this popular view (Putnam 1975).

Informed or influenced by scientism, many people fail to distinguish between hard and soft humanities or hard and soft science. They speak and behave in a way which suggests that all science subjects are hard and all humanities subjects are soft. Rarely, if ever, any working physicist would consent to believing that sociology is a (hard) science (Putnam 1982: 202). Similarly people lacking scientific temperament but, or because of that, seized by scientism, fail to notice, what they should have considered a remarkable achievement, that some technology institute of India has established Centre of Exact Humanities,[42] and some other IITs are trying to establish strong department of humanities.[43] Blinded by scientism some people would like to dismiss the idea of exact humanities as a gimmick. They do not know that this idea is at least 2200 years old.[44] Also associated with scientism is the once popular belief that science is *the* knowledge or the only superior knowledge because it is derived from *the scientific method*. It is now common sense that there is no such thing as a scientific method or at least *the* scientific method (Putnam 1982). So far there is nothing much in the correct conception of science or the true nature of it which can explain or justify why science should have absolute priority in university or why humanities should have a position lower down in the scale. We skip here the discussion of the other relevant matters like the notions of education and university, their different types, etc. The true reason for the dominance of science we have stated already.

It seems to be undeniable that relative to science the position of humanities cannot and should not be higher than what it is now. For, it is too palpable that for over last three centuries science has been making steady progress. By contrast humanities is lagging behind. This judgment is also hasty, at least for two different reasons. Within the same time frame humanities has added a number of new areas or disciplines of knowledge from sociology to economics and from socio-linguistics to cognitive psychology. We cannot deny that these new areas mark extension and advance of knowledge. Secondly, a careful examination will reveal that the fast and tremendous progress

of science is not necessarily or simply due to any inherent superiority of it or its method. It is largely due to some innovative strategy on the part of some scientists[45] as well as some contingent socio-economic and political military conditions.[46] We may as well illustrate this crucially important point for it can shed much light on the true nature of humanities. The nature of the case being what it is we are to take philosophy in particular, of all the subjects coming under humanities, for consideration and contrast. So far as the innovative strategy is concerned, it may be noted that science owes its progress to judicious (strategic) decision of *avoiding* certain deep problems. It amounts to certain self-imposed limitations. Modern scientific revolution of Europe started with the development of (new) science of mechanics, basically the study of motion. However, the study of motion was not new; it started long before. Among the ancient scholars who studied the problem and are known as such is Aristotle. Aristotle's study is philosophical not simply because it is speculative and not empirical or experimental but particularly for the fact that it asks a question which from the time of Newton came to be known as non-scientific but metaphysical. This question is the question of the origin of motion. So even when science and humanities both study apparently the same question or phenomenon – time, say – they do not really do so. We cannot say in the study of the same phenomenon, science makes tremendous progress within a span of four centuries whereas humanities, or philosophy to be specific, remained stagnant for more than 2000 years or so. If we closely consider history, we find that progress of science here cannot mean the usual thing, that it has solved the problem which philosophy could not solve. Newton did not solve the problem of Aristotle but he avoided it, though in doing so he proved what a genius he was and how extraordinary was his power of insight.[47] As to how he could manage to avoid discussing the problem of the *origin* of motion which gave so much trouble to Aristotle, the answer, in an oversimplified way, is that Newton simply made an assumption or decision that all bodies (physical systems) are in constant (and uniform) motion or rest. So in (his) physics, it makes no consistent sense to ask the question how a physical system *started* to move, how its motion originated. Now onward the question of origin became a paradigmatic question of metaphysics. Science steers clear of such metaphysical questions and started discussing far less difficult questions like the change of direction and rate of motion and the like. These are more manageable questions, more easily solvable in real time. (It is a different question that, as a matter of irony, the question of *origin* – the origin this time of the universe – surfaced in science

again when physics matured enough and almost reached the end of its journey.)[48]

Another example of self-imposed limitation which enabled science to progress is that modern science at least for four centuries confined its inquiry to only one aspect of natural phenomena, their quantitative aspect. Such examples show that conscious and judicious decision to limit its inquiry to simpler issues and selective aspects of the object studied as well as study of problems at a time, contributed much to the visible and fast progress of science. Scientists know this but the advocates of scientism do not. Scientism does not know that there is no real basis of comparing humanities (like philosophy) with science and fixing, on the basis of it, the place of humanities. As against the partial and selective approach of science, philosophy takes a synoptic approach and studies the reality as a whole including, where applicable, its psychical and spiritual aspects. In this broad picture of man and his place in the universe, philosophy commits itself to discussing moral or aesthetic phenomenon which defies just quantitative treatment. These, and not any inherent superiority of it, that enabled science to arrive at a more definite knowledge within a far shorter time (we also need to remember that philosophy has a much longer history than *modern* science) and about a small area of the universe, particularly the universe of man. This short discussion may be deemed adequate to show that it is far more difficult than is usually realized to objectively determine the place of humanities in university.

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We now turn for a while, before finally returning to some more general academic considerations, to the criterion of the contribution to human progress which again is popularly believed to privilege science and secures for it a higher position in society and hence in university also. On the same criterion, it is believed, we can justifiably assign humanities a lower place in society and university as it is actually being assigned today. In a modern democratic society, there is a closer relationship between university and society, and we need not spend time on clarifying different aspects of this relationship that are quite relevant for determining the place of humanities in university. None the less, adequate clarification of this and other related ideas are both necessary and lacking. In different place and time the dominant ideology of progress and the dominant conception of society and university as well as of education vary. For illustration we can recall or make reference to different conceptions of education. On one extreme there is the loaded conception according to which

education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.[49] On the other extreme, there are host of views like education is a means "to keep kids off the streets until they're old enough to be unemployed" or, in a more serious vein, it is a means of creating 'a skilled work-force for the economy' or, as Louis Althusser (1918–90) held, it is an instrument of spreading bourgeois ideology or reproducing the dominant culture (Osborne and Loon 1996: 164–166). The conception of society and education in old Sparta and contemporary America are not the same; but we do not keep ourselves explicitly aware of these truths or the needed clarifications. In these days, progress is understood to mean, unless said otherwise, *social* progress, which is measured primarily in terms of economic growth and political power and stability. Further the society is conceived as a flat society which progresses horizontally. Its progress is measured more in terms of quantity; in terms number of people brought under maximum social, economic and political amenities. However, in countries like classical India or ancient Greece (Athens in particular) society was not conceived primarily or exclusively as a flat society. Man is conceived in such a society as not only a social animal but also a cultural individual. The culture again is not just flat where progress is conceived exclusively as development along horizontal line. The vertical growth of individuals counts as much. For example, in India plenty of food and opportunity of sharing it with others[50] were among the regular objectives but consistently with it (and through it) men used to aspire for individual spiritual, and even soteriological, development. The constant preoccupation of such society is to ensure a happy combination of both horizontal and vertical growth – pursuit of worldly (including social) prosperity (or abhyudaya) of greater number of people as well as the spiritual liberation of a few (at any given time). Such a society does not say *let science develop and not art* or *let men be fulfilled as biological being but not as a spiritual being*. There is nothing mystical about such comprehensive and inclusive conception of progress. Rather such progress alone suits human cultural aspiration. Both culture and human individual are complex unity – a coherent system of diverse aspects, interests and what not. The place of humanities in such a society is very central, more central than professional courses or even science. Science indirectly through technology contributes to the much needed social development understood as provision for food, shelter, security, health care, etc., and above all education for all or the maximum number of people. While providing for these goods we think only of the *requirement* which men as biological beings have of them; what is equally essential is

that men get these things according to their tastes also. After the fulfillment of the basic common requirements for survival, man craves for fulfillment as cultural individual which is the crux of the vertical growth. The importance of edifying education, art, literature and so on cannot be ignored, doubted or disputed. If science contributes distantly and indirectly to the fulfillment of these needs humanities does so more directly.[51] So far as the basic progress and development are concerned science and technology contribute directly but humanities only distantly. The best idea of progress is comprehensive growth which consists in the *appropriate* development of all according to the need, capacity and taste of each (as far as practicable). Such a conception of progress takes care of social responsibility as well as individual freedom and recognizes individual differences in taste and capacity without denying their common needs. Humanities and particularly philosophy in India as well as in classical Greece[52] is viewed as contributing directly to the vertical growth by preserving and promoting the edifying culture of those few who aspire for the soteriological goal of life. Anyway, if we consider the potential of humanities for contributing to the all round development of a society as well as its indispensable role in the vertical growth of man then we cannot assign it a marginal place even in university. When we manage to do so we go by some preferred conception of university and university education on the one hand and of human progress on the other. Humanities should be central to the teaching and research programme of a university. After a lapse of time the importance of humanities is being brought back to the focus of attention in recent times. We have given some examples before let us present one more.

This time, the example shows that contrary to the popular belief expert opinion based on recent surveys contends that knowledge of humanities is a necessary component of human development index (HDI) – human development in the current familiar sense. About hundred years back when these modern jargons were not introduced thinking minds in India insisted on comprehensive and balanced education (with emphasis on literary, scientific and technological subjects) both for nation-building and character building, which should further have its root in the life and aspirations of the people of India.[53] Leaders of India after independence almost forgot all about it. However, now we find that recent study, research and survey fully endorse the views of our perceptive predecessors. A study cum survey was "made by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) group on some aspects of the relationship between economic development and scientific progress in the OECD member countries" (Bhattacharyya 2000). It was already accepted that economic growth was not the only or the best indicator of

social development which rather depends on men's over-all well-being and welfare. HDI, being used since then, includes as one essential factor 'educational attainment comprising adult literacy'. In this connection we note that OECD Study group in question introduced the concept of civic scientific literacy (CSL). We do not intend to go into any detailed discussion of this "socially pertinent and significant factor, that is, the new index called CSL, which appears so far to have passed somewhat unnoticed and unattended to in this sub-continent [India]" (Mukhopadhyay, 2014b: 30). How CSL is linked to HDI? Adult literacy has central importance in HDI.

> If the literacy is . . . judged by stricter criteria and higher demands it should have some reflection of CSL with the development of twin components of civility and scientific rationality. The development of real scientifically oriented bends of mind and of degree of rationality could only lead to and would ensure rational choices of behaviour in every aspect of life. One must also remember, in this context, that enlarging or widening the scope of such choices and behaviour has nowadays become the benchmark for and focal theme of development.
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> The European Union emphasises . . . Society [that is] driven by citizens who are aware of their own responsibilities and are imbued with a spirit of solidarity towards those with whom they form local/national European communities. Besides, in civil society the cultural relevance and the social function of science, the development of scientific temper and the spirit of tolerance of others' views are to be inculcated and highly stressed . . . The scientists, the scientific-technocratic personnel and the scientific community at large in the civil societies should have the preliminary ideas of the tenets and norms of socially responsive and socially responsible behavior *which could be attained only by acquiring some basic knowledge in the foundations of Humanities and societies (FHS)* so that he/she as administrator or political scientist, or executive-in-action, should or does not ever feel too shaky to arrive at any definite conclusive judgment on the *ethical* aspect of any controversial scientific and/or technological issue. The system of introduction and imparting a kind of *integrated education (in science and all streams)* and culture might be viewed as the 'civic-scientific' literacy. It has the seeds and embryos of both the humanist societies with emphasis on social welfare of mankind and the rationalist societies driven mainly by the scientific credos.
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> (ibid., 30–31)[54]

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In this section we would like to advance a few general and academic considerations (which will apply not to philosophy alone but to all developed branches of knowledge including all such branches of science and humanities) why humanities cannot be denied a central and important place in university education without weakening in the long run whichever other subject is assigned exclusive priority. Only in our ignorance of fact and reason, we can think or act otherwise. The most important consideration is that for the development of any branch of knowledge and particularly any highly specialized branch of knowledge – science or certain area of science, say – there is need for honest appreciation and authentic criticisms. This can be ensured only if there is a community of informed amateurs around every specialized branch of knowledge. *Implicit* realization (but not explicit understanding) of this might have been there when in recent times scholars started emphasizing the need for interdisciplinary research and dialogue. There was a time when science was a matter of individual pursuit like music or painting. Copernicus, Galileo and Newton belonged to this age. In course of its development, science became on the one hand a matter of group or collective activity and on the other it became divided into increasing number of specialized areas of research. Further many new disciplines came to be added to the growing literature of science necessitating the distinction, within otherwise highly institutionalized science, into soft and hard science. Philosophers of science know how difficult it is to capture within one precise and clear description all that go by the name of science today (Putnam 1982 and also Agassi 1969). This is independent of the problem created by the need being felt to change the current conception of science. Largely as a result of this, most of the time we use the word *science* in what may be said in an intuitive sense. Such general understanding of science among the policy makers and administrators largely determines the place of science in university. Similarly the general understanding of the development of science is also partial and imprecise not necessarily or wholly wrong though. For example, it is often said that today science has advanced so much that no single society, country or government is able to supply funds adequate for such research projects as is being supported by CERN. We are not now speaking of this type of cooperation and joint socio-economic venture for scientific research. We are referring to one common practice of the scientists. It is a part of the scientific method to analyze a big problem into its smaller and relatively simple components and address them piecemeal. In the processes many specialized areas within one branch of science developed and scientific knowledge grew incredibly deep and intensive on one hand and increasingly

fragmented on the other. Every one of these highly specialized areas can be understood by a very small group of individuals at the required level of sophistication.

This very small and isolated group alone can make further significant contributions necessary for the new advancement of the area; and more importantly they alone can judge the worth of any new (or claimed to be new) work in the field. However, the discerning people know that it tends to become increasingly difficult to accept as objective and true whatever the members of such a group claim as their achievement or how they judge the value of this achievement. At this level of specialization, sophistication and isolation, it becomes a great burden or obligation for the few experts of the field to forge a strong bond among them and put up a common front so that the society can be intimidated to accept (without properly understanding it) the validity of the claim of the group and the importance of their putative achievement and further the society could be forced to maintaining the research programme of the group both economically and education policy wise. Such small group of scholars cannot afford the luxury of publicly (in regular scientific journals, say) criticizing work and achievement of the fellow members of the small group. They are forced to shower praise and support even when the same is not strictly warranted. Science under such a condition cannot remain a truly objective and rational enterprise.[55] It becomes rather the work of a certain vested interest. However, and now the more important point, always there will be some scholars who do not actually belong to this small group as its members but take serious and sincere interest (from outside) in the area of knowledge this group represents. They are not among the lay or lay educated men of the society either; rather each one of them is an established scholar in his own right and a specialist in his own branch of knowledge. Such men of great understanding and wide interest around any specialized branch of knowledge, whether in science or humanities, naturally form a community of informed amateurs around the highly specialized area of knowledge in question which is being actually and primarily manned by a very small group of specialists.

Honest criticisms, authentic queries and critical appreciation, so essential for the genuine growth of knowledge in any highly specialized branch, can come from such community of informed amateurs around the branch of knowledge in question. Besides contributing in this way richly to the development of highly specialized knowledge, this community of scholars can extend necessary support to the small group of specialists and defend them against peer pressure and

uninvited interference from the established peer group. One needs to read the scientists like Sellari and Narlikar to believe how serious and acute has become the problem of survival for individual or small group of researchers in advanced areas of science (Sellari 2000 and for Narlikar's view Mukhopadhyay 2006).

The standard objection that it is not possible to communicate with the outsiders when it is a matter of highly specialized knowledge is not really convincing. First, there are many kinds and levels of outsiders. We have already said that the persons who form the community of *informed* amateurs are not lay individuals. Besides, any number of actual instances are available when great scientists communicated technical matters in non-technical language with different genre of outsiders. Communication between Newton and John Locke and Stephen Hawking's works like *A Brief History of Time* are standard examples. Besides, though physics is far more advanced today, what Boltzmann used to say and practice in his time and life is still relevant.

> His lectures in theoretical physics were attended by many non-physicists, who could understand the problems which Boltzmann took care to state independently of the mathematical arguments. 'The true theoreticians' he wrote 'make only sparing use of formulae. It is in the books of the allegedly practical thinkers that one finds formulae only too frequently, and used for mere adornment'.
> (Feyerabend 2016: 366)

There is also an instance when two highly placed physicists and a man from the field of art and films formed a team; they used to meet regularly and talked about serious scientific matters. The outcome of this is a fine book which is as interesting and informative as possible. The queries and criticisms of their non-technical friend were as serious as were honest the efforts of the scientists to meet them (Sellari 2000). Anyway, if communities of informed amateurs can contribute so much to the preservation and growth of specialized branches of knowledge in any field whether science or humanities or art, then universities should reorient themselves and provide simultaneously an atmosphere for the birth and growth of scholars who besides being expert in their own fields could also act as informed amateur in respect of some other specialized branch of knowledge. University education should mean a healthy combination of highly specialized training and inculcation of broad interest and vision among the students and hence future researchers and teachers. This cannot be achieved if only certain areas of human knowledge is accorded high place at the cost of other such

areas of knowledge and, in fine, if humanities is not given a position of importance in university. As we said before, this is being increasingly realized by many scholars and in many institutions.

It cannot be objected that a man with so much knowledge in diverse fields is an unrealistic dream today when many branches of knowledge (science) have made incredible progress and have grown immensely both in intensity and extensiveness. For, first it is to be noted that there is nothing unnatural or unreal about the conception of an informed amateur. As a matter of fact, expert specialist of any given area of specialized knowledge is often found to take very serious interest in other branches of knowledge. Even if there were absence of explicit awareness of the need for the kind of men just stated and the service they can render, there were and still there are men who could (in different degrees) qualify for the title of informed amateur as just explained. If today there is no renaissance universal man (Mazzeo 1969: 11), still there are personalities who are admired for being a complete man. In different ages we find such persons. For example, Constantine Huygens, of seventeenth century, to whom Leibnitz is enormously indebted for his scientific and philosophical views, was one such person; and Homi Bhabha, an Indian scientist of the twentieth century, has actually been claimed to be another such scholar. It has been noted that Huygens "collected antiquities, devised scientific instruments and cultivated a taste for natural curiosities. He painted, wrote poetry in several languages and played the lute for the king of England . . . He loved the humanist art of Rubens, but recognized the young Rembrandt's supremacy as a history painter".[55] Any average and normal man has diverse interests. If a fully developed man does not have it, then that would be an exception, or perhaps a sort of deformity induced by narrow professionalism and or faulty education. Rarely do we find a great figure in any single field who does not have interest and adequate understanding of matters of some other fields. The great scientist S. Chandrasekhar was a great appreciator of natural beauty and literature (Chandrasekhar 1990: 87). Rabindranath composed poetry and lyrics, was a painter and a singer and contributed to almost all branches of literature and art. He was besides, an educationist – thinker and activist in the field of education – and wrote science books for young boys and girls. History tells us that there always had been some gifted men with uncommon ability to understand and appreciate besides very broad vision and wide range of interest.

We may state one last academic consideration why humanities should not be thought to have or deserve a marginal place in university. The culture and practice of specialization (often in reality over

specialization and that again too early) had their use and served their purpose. Now it is an age of combination and cooperation rather than isolation. We are no longer in the age of chemistry, chemical engineering and biology, all as separate disciplines; today we are in the age of chemical biology, astrophysics, psycho-linguistics and so on. We are discovering new connections among areas of knowledge that we have been pursuing separately and in isolation from one another. It is a step beyond the mere detection of the defect of over specialization which was made even before the second half of the twentieth century. By then the error and artificiality of associationism and mind-stuff theory or atomistic behaviourism in psychology were well known to scholars with broader vision and better understanding. (These are a few random examples). Against the background of this realization, certain new method or guideline for theory building was proposed during the movement of encyclopaedia of unified sciences. This new method was an improvement upon and corrective of the one-sidedness of the method which Descartes suggested in the seventeenth century. The heart of the matter is that the theoretician who is to study a certain phenomenon should take the phenomenon in question in its *adequate complexity* rather than in its sort of imposed and artificial or invented simplicity.[57]

All these developments in our understanding and experience contributed to the emergence of what may be called the holistic conception of knowledge. According to it, the divisions of knowledge into science and humanities or of physics and philosophy or logic and mathematics may be useful but they do not reveal the central truth about human knowledge and its progress. The truth is that there is but one single and ever evolving body of human knowledge. For reasons like practical convenience, etc., we may divide this single body of knowledge and split it into different branches, but there is no rational justification, strictly speaking, why some should be judged superior or inferior, as the case may be, compared to another. Is epistemology the first philosophy having superiority over science? Scholars like Quine have denied it. Quine even denies that logic is more fundamental than mathematics. He is one of the staunch supporters of holistic conception of human knowledge.

Of the last two blows that scientism received, one came from the well known philosopher of science like Putnam (Putnam 1982) that there is no fixed method of science and so the claim of the superiority of scientific knowledge cannot be justified in terms of its being based on scientific method. Putnam also denied that science is the totality of human knowledge. Scientism received its second blow from scholars like Richard Swinburne who commands knowledge of religion and

philosophy of science. He has discussed in detail and has shown persuasively that even without being science, humanities, even rational theology, use explanations which can compare favourably with the standard scientific explanation (Mukhopadhyay 1992). For all these reasons we find untenable the thesis that humanities has or should have relatively a lower position in university. We may as well recollect the words with which Grafton concluded his beautiful and long paper and say 'humanism lives'. We need to add only that for one who can see in an unbiased way and from the right perspective, know that the importance and position of humanities has not really diminished in the life of man, human society or culture. No man, society and culture can be considered complete or well developed without contributions from or respect for humanities. The problematic place of humanities is more a matter of (ill-formed) conception than fact.

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Even if we grant that humanities is no longer very popular and that today it does not enjoy a high place in university, the question is what lesson we should learn from such a situation or how should we respond to it. Undefined or ill defined popularity is not anything covetable rather it may turn out dangerous. Today humanities professionals are no less concerned with what harm popularity is doing to a number of subjects. We have no scope to discuss this point here; perhaps no need is there either. Every concerned scholar of the subjects can testify to the truth of this in case of subjects like say Vedanta and ethics. Vedanta has become widely popular today not only in India but in the world over. We know also how it has happened. The result is that there has emerged such a thing as *popular* Vedanta which has largely marginalized the authentic analytical and highly sophisticated Vedanta philosophy. There the matter does not end. Today this popular Vedanta is being taken and propagated as *the* representative philosophy of India (with perhaps one exception, Buddhism, which is no less a popular version of authentic Buddhism). The modern world, even modern India, is about to forget so many other schools of philosophical thoughts which India developed over centuries and which are still living unsung and unheard of. The result is graver still. It is just one step from Vedantic India to spiritual and mystical India, the picture of India the Orientalists had constructed and propagated since about the nineteenth century to justify, what is evidently false: that the West alone is the scientific and rational culture. The fast-spreading popular Vedanta, thanks to the effort of a section of liberal Hindus of our times, is out to prove that the Orientalists' view is correct. The

West was very eager to forget that India was ever a total culture with the claim to have developed her own science and philosophy, religion and art, in a word and in current idiom, both science and technology. Today modern India is going to forget that India as a culture always has been and still is highly spiritual and deeply rational.[58]

The other example is ethics. All over the world there is increasing concern for the rapid erosion of values and as a consequence of it there is increasing demand for value education. Ethics has become very popular in the process. Those who have direct experience of what is being discussed in the name of ethics in many business schools and other organizations (at least in India today) will agree that there is emerging if it has not already emerged, such a thing as popular ethics. How much good it can do to society is doubtful but there is no doubt that it is going to harm the subject itself.

We need to take a stand, whether in university or in the larger platform of local or global society, against the tendency to popularize and distort a culture in general or subjects like humanities or science in particular. We need strong resolution based on sustained and critical thinking on all aspects of the matter and wait patiently for the better days to come and till such time, we should endeavour to keep humanities alive, in however diminutive form, in its full authenticity and rigour. General critics are not to be trusted much. They will deride soft humanities for its softness and turn away from hard humanities as useless technicalities. Their policy is head, we win, and tail, you lose. The fact is that humanism has not lost either its vitality or importance. At a time when we are confronted by a technological culture which threatens to fully mechanize human life, the hope of survival of man (of the lay men, and of scientists and technocrats, for they are also men first) lies in humanities.

Every age produced great scholars in the field of humanities and in science. Science's popularity is due mainly to its connection with technology. But till the days of steam engine, this connection was little to nil (Majumdar 1963). Technological innovations have enabled tremendous progress in experimental physics, neurology, cognitive psychology, etc. Now technology and so (experimental) science are, because of their market value, captive in the hands of industry[59] and is largely constrained by such nonacademic compulsions as military exigency or political urgency. Theoretical science and, more so, humanities are still free to a large extent. We had better enjoy this freedom and discharge the obligation of keeping safe at least the academic morality and insist on having science and technology, trade and commerce, business and

politics with a human face. We should be alert and active to preserve and promote the collective human safety and individual freedom.[60]

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We should also note that education is not just for scholarship and 'useful' knowledge viewed as power to control and dominate external and physical nature. Education is also, if not primarily, meant to produce transformations in the life of man in certain desirable direction. It is thus that education enhances what may be called the personal culture which makes a man a complete person. Such a culture is not conceivable without history, literature or philosophy and only in terms of science and technology. Dividing the cultures of the world into scientific and religious or total body of human knowledge into humanities and science is a convenient and useful device invented by men for specific purposes. Such divisions are not final or they are not ultimate truths.[61] As such these divisions are bound to overlap and intersect. There was never a time in the history of mankind when a race which had a well developed culture but no technology or even incipient science. Cave painting is as old as the use of technology. Sometimes technology moved faster than science and sometimes theory progressed ahead of technology; but both these as well as literary knowledge and art were always there shaping complete men as well as a complete culture. The progress of technology has been determined and guided as much by science as by economic and military interests, current ideology of progress, even accidental inventions and individual genius. Today we lack many people who can comprehend things in their entirety: men of vision, broadness of mind, wide ranging interest and taste. We have lost our personal culture to appreciate the few such persons who are still there though they may not have much say in university or society. Today's assembly line education[62] is so designed that there will be no *person* but only *type* (of men), *standard* men, who cannot be distinguished one from another (ibid.). In the total experience of any normal human individual, who is born to be a complete man, there are contributions from science to religion, philosophy to aesthetics, and poetry to politics and so on. Ideally education should enable each man in at least the academic field to become an informed amateur in the sense described. Against, this background if a university cannot take a holistic view of knowledge and inclusive view of human progress through education or takes a narrow view of education informed by some exterior consideration and local issues, and instead degrade humanities (or for the matter of that any other branch of knowledge) then we should endeavour to change and improve the university, its

philosophy and syllabi, rather than submit to its ranking of subjects. Serious issue is not what place university accords to humanities but what place the academicians and the right thinking men in society accord to such a university.

In his beautiful and painstaking article, "The New Science and the Traditions of Humanism", Anthony Grafton (2001) made a detailed study of Europe's transition from humanism to modernity. He began by noting similarities and dissimilarities between Constantijin Huygens (1596–1687) and his contemporary Descartes (1596–1650). Both are established names in the field of science. But whereas Descartes "deliberately turned away from the humanist learning and scholastic philosophy of the colleges and built the world anew [,] Huygens, by contrast, combined humanist and scientific interests, classical and modern tastes without strain. He was as delighted to remember how he learned to write Latin as how he learned to use the microscope. He saw no opposition between his up-to-date and his traditional endeavours" (ibid., 98). At the end Grafton writes that in the age of humanism different disciplines flourished together. "The Latin writers of a relatively backward country, England, produced substantial contributions to virtually every literary and scientific, philosophical and historical genre known in the time of Elizabeth I. and James I. *Humanism Lived* deep into the age of science" (ibid., 117). Let us hope that humanities and humanistic culture – a culture of wide and integrated scholarship and values – is alive even today and will continue to live in future. Universities which assign low place to humanities better take note of this.

Notes

1 During these days or beginning slightly earlier, modern European science, which got considerable boost from military considerations, made unprecedented and rapid progress. Partly because of this, the rift between science and humanities, not only in universities but also in societies, started growing increasingly wide. This has been well attested by C. P. Snow in his influential Rede Lectures. See Snow 1959.

2 Calcutta (now the capital of the state of West Bengal) remained for few more years the capital of British India.

3 Despite its look, which is deceptive, it is not necessarily the simplest question to ask and answer with a *yes*.

4 This has nothing to do with today's Central University. The issue of National University caused great debate involving personalities like Aurobindo (later Sri Aurobindo), Anne Besant and others.

5 In 1930 Professor K. C. Bhattacharya noted India's failure to secure this and other related goals. See Bhattacharya, K. C. 1984.

6 University is sometimes understood to mean *legal* institution with the right to certify one's educational achievements on the basis of test conducted under its supervision. The two functions of teaching and examining are not always viewed as necessarily inseparable. Again there is a view that university is an academic institution of *teaching* of only non-professional subjects. Again sometimes it is understood as mainly an institution of *learning* or higher learning.

7 This was said by Lord Lytton, the then Chancellor of Calcutta University, in 1877. See Professor Pramathanath Banerjee et al., (Eds.) 1957, pp. 107–108. One is reminded of what Stephen Leacock said about the University of Oxford in his 'Oxford as I see it'; see in Leacock 1922.

8 Unmanageably huge number of students, too many universities compared to the number of available teaching personnel, lack of coordination or connection between what the teachers are supposed to teach and what are their current research interest, etc., are some of the factors that are detrimental to (mew) knowledge generation. However, we need to solve these problems rather than forget what a university should be like.

9 We seem to have lost all hope that universities can be viable centres of higher research and knowledge generation. We are shifting higher researches to newly founded research institutions *outside* universities. This is one of the many different forms which marginalization of university takes today. The rate of increase of this tendency and of the number of research institutes foretell that before long these research institutes will cease to have regular supply of competent researchers and close down or they will turn themselves into so many teaching institutions of a sort or mini universities. (As a matter of fact many of the research institutes today run regular teaching programmes in concerned subjects. Nowadays most promising and established scholars capable of guiding higher research are to be found only in research institutions and not in regular universities. Research institutions require, in order to maintain their character and quality, regular inflow of competent university pass outs as researchers, but marginalized universities with very few best scholars and teachers on their staff can hardly fulfill this need. To maintain standard of research the research institutions are turning themselves partly into teaching institution or mini universities even at the cost of cutting down time for research. Thus both university and research institutions are running the risk of losing their standard. This is one side of the problem. On the other side (admitting the great need of research institutions outside regular universities), it may be asked why there is extreme dearth of research centres for humanities. It may as well be one of the reasons why humanities does not have a better place either in university or society.

10 "I don't believe that there is *really* an agreement in our culture as to what is a 'science' and what isn't" Putnam 1982, p. 202.

11 The inadequacy of this way of specifying humanities or collecting the subjects that come under humanities is quite obvious. For, if it is not to be circular, then there should be a different and precise way of saying what science is. This requirement, we have already seen, is hard to fulfill. Still we treat humanities to be a single group of many subjects. We will later note some sense of humanities and or science which is perhaps the oldest and most stable.

12 For this paragraph see particularly Mazzeo 1969 (Chapter 1, p. 40).
13 The information that there are hard humanities and department of exact humanities evokes curiosity or disbelief. However it is on record that Thucydides (c.460–395 B.C.) in ancient Greece, and Richard Swinburne (1934–) in our times are certain that there not only can be but also is hard humanities. Thucydides claims that his history, in contrast to Herodotus' work, contains exact knowledge. (See Tripathi A., 1986, p. 5). Swinburne claims that we have and can have scientific explanation even outside science such as in philosophy or even in philosophy of religion. (See Swinburne 1992).
14 For example, if by human progress we understand just social progress and that too in a narrow sense then the edifying knowledge which humanities sometimes produce does not count much.
15 In those days, there was no science in the modern sense to act as instrument of human progress. Otherwise there was no time in human history when there was no science or technology or when they did not serve some human purpose.
16 Cf. Snow 1959. But this optimism began to weaken after the world wars. Cf. Osborne 1966 and Tobajas 2008.
17 Satish Chandra Mukherjee made this observation. See P. K. Mukhopadhyay 2014b.
18 One may draw this implication from Miri and Bhargava 2010–11.
19 Rorty is the best example. Even Quine says, "Sophia yes, philosophia not necessarily". Marx accused philosophers of only interpreting where transformation was urgently needed. For comment on this view of Marx, see P. K. Mukhopadhyay 2014a.
20 This seems to be partly the view of Miri and Bhargava 2010–11.
21 This includes particularly the scholars like Miri and Bhargava. Incidentally, we wish these scholars included in their review at least two other areas of ICPR's failure which need serious considerations. ICPR did not do anything to make government take initiative towards establishing some centres of higher research in philosophy and in many other humanities subjects (parallel to many in the field of science). Nor did the ICPR do anything to promote some of the neglected areas of philosophy such as philosophy of law and philosophy of art.
22 One, though not the only, reason why it is so is that what we mean by science today has no connection with India's own scientific tradition or any of the developed branches of knowledge. It is unlikely that Western science would take its root in Indian ethos or we will make steady progress in science if only the medium of instruction is changed to vernacular as some seem to suggest.
23 Sometime in 1960s the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi accused, during the sessions of Indian Science Congress, the scientists of our country of leading a schizophrenic existence. Around the same time, Professor Murty suggested that philosophy professionals in India should shift their attention to the area of philosophy of language. It was heeded to some extent. But the suggestion made by Professor Hiriyanna in 1919, which could result in the development of Indian philosophy of art, did not receive due consideration.

24 This view and formulation of Kant's final view in the matter, which revolutionized the conception of philosophy, is itself popular and not strictly correct. See P. K. Mukhopadhyay 2014a.
25 To be accurate, pseudo factual knowledge.
26 Scholars like Searle and Penrose are working with full awareness of the contribution each of these makes towards the enrichment of the other.
27 Many things that Reichenbach, Putnam, Norwood, Russell, Hanson, etc., have written show this; we have discussed the matter in the lecture, delivered in a seminar at the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, "The Present State of Physics and Philosophers' Worry" (unpublished).
28 See in particular Jonathan Shear edited *Consciousness Studies* and his own work of 1997 as also the works of thinkers like Penrose, Searle, Dennet, etc.
29 Some such things were in the mind of the great men who between 1870s and 1906 accused modern university education in India as *artificial*. See P. K. Muhopadhyay 2014b.
30 The possibility of giving recognizable place to Indian science was more problematic.
31 The practice of keeping Indian knowledge systems and authentic custodians of them outside university and university education in India continue even later. To give two quick examples at random: the anthology of selected papers presented during the first twenty-five years of the sessions of Indian Philosophy Congress contains laudatory references to the Pundits but does not contain a single paper by a pundit; Pundits were never invited nor did they find themselves welcome in the community of university scholars. The second example is the Kothari Education Commission of Free India; it included about twelve foreign educationists as members of the commission but not a single pundit. But we never tire of publicly praising these Pundits. Dr. Kothari himself was a great admirer of certain tenets of classical Indian philosophy, Jain philosophy to be particular, for its scientific potential. (Incidentally, Wheeler [1911–2008], a later collaborator of Einstein, suggested that the scientists in the field of quantum mechanics should search for insights in ancient philosophical writings of Greece.)
32 This is the general condition; very few scholars like J. N. Mohanty, however, did just this.
33 From motive not very difficult to guess.
34 See P. K. Mukhopadhyay "Sense and Relevance of Philosophy", published in the ICPR Bulletin.
35 Debiprasad Chattopadhyay advocated this view with quite a good amount of success. But see P. K. Mukhopadhyay 1969.
36 Mukhopadhyay, "Human Unity and India's Message to the World", etc. forthcoming.
37 Adi Samkaracarya is the best-known example but the students of philosophy in particular know that there have been many more including Udayanacarya of the tenth century.
38 Very few people know of Mm Panditraj Rajesvar Sastri Dravid's edition of Arthasastra (published by Sampurnanada Sanskrit University) which not only contains his two rich commentaries but also records that he took up debate with modern scholars on points of history and sociology. Similarly in spite of the suggestion in Hiriyanna 1919 in this direction,

hardly anything has been done to address the situation and develop Indian philosophy of art though the literature on aesthetics produced by the Indians excels both in quantity and quality similar literature of any other culture or country. Currently some efforts, very few indeed, in this direction are underway. Reference may be made to the courses of CEH of IIIT, Hyderabad and the Summer Institute in "Formal and Philosophical Approaches to Indian Art" organized in IIT, BHU, in June 2014 by Professor Navjyoti Singh and Udayana Bajpeyi.

39 We have discussed it elsewhere rather elaborately; please see Mukhopadhyay 1995.

40 Really speaking the belief seems to be somewhat wrong. First the geographical location of Greece is no sure indication that Greece belongs to the Western hemisphere and not to the Eastern hemisphere or just at the centre of the globe. Besides, countries like India has much more cultural affinity with ancient Greece than Europe. Because of this, the authentic Indian mind can better and more accurately understand the Greek philosophical thought. Mukhopadhyay 1984 and 1995.

41 Ayer, *The Problems of Knowledge*, Pelicans.

42 IIIT, Hyderabad is running this centre now about seven years.

43 I refer to IIT, BHU.

44 The Greek historian Thucydides (c.460–399 B. C.) effectively claimed that his *The Peloponnesian War* was, unlike the work of Herodotous, exact.

45 We have far less time than is required for the examination of this or even for indicating how such examination may be conducted.

46 In the twentieth century, at least, science in Europe got great boost due to military considerations.

47 Whether or not Newton saw as much, later development of science proves it.

48 See Hawking 1988. As physics became fully developed, there developed from within the science, a need or at least an irresistible desire for an answer to the big metaphysical question of the *origin* of the universe. In this advanced area of physics or current scientific cosmology, the troublesome question of the origin of time has also surfaced. And now there is a realization among great physicists like Feynman that whereas time is a fundamental and core theme of it, science knows next to nothing about time. It reminds one of what Thomas Aquinas said about time long before. These have been little elaborately discussed in P. K. Mukhopadhyay 2009.

49 Swami Vivekananda, with the help of his followers, made this conception very popular among contemporary Indians. It is to be noted, however, that the records of the views and activities of Vivekananda's contemporaries, who were leading figures of the national education reform movement of the time, do not mention or make reference to Vivekananda's view on education. In whichever way we may like to understand this phenomenon, Vivekananda's views on education do not seem to have much impact on his contemporaries. This does not mean that the particular conception of education in question is false (though it is undoubtedly vague and loaded) or that his contemporaries rejected it.

50 The Veda records such prayers as "Annam ca vahu kurvita, athitimsca labhemahi" (may we have plenty of food and find guests to feed). Besides there was desire for universal happiness and good health; welfare for all; suffering for none; and expectation of long (happy) life.

51 Quine would agree, but he categorically says philosophy (as the philosophy professionals of Euro-America) views it is a technical subject, and unlike edifying literature, it has nothing to contribute to human progress except perhaps intellectual progress.

52 Socrates is one of the best examples of what desirable transformation philosophy (as a personal culture) can bring to the life (and death!) of some individual. Plato's famous Dialogue, 'Apology' is one of the best accounts and records of it. But Socrates was not the only such person; we can refer to Thales also. "Philosophers could make money if they wanted to do so, he [Thales] reportedly declared, but willingly were poor because they valued knowledge above everything else, even wealth. No doubt Thales would never enroll in a business school; however, if he did, he would earn all A's." See Burr and Goldinger, 2008, p. 440. There are many examples of such persons both in classical and modern India.

53 We have discussed this in connection with the philosophy of national education or education as conceived by the National Council of Education, Bengal. See Mukhopadhyay 2014b.

54 There is growing awareness that technologists and scientists in areas like genetics and human genome research should keep close touch with humanities, particularly with ethics, as there is far-reaching effects of their research on man and environment. In this connection the readers may find interesting books like Callicot and Ames (Eds.) 1989.

55 This account may not be thought to be a wholly a dramatized account of what is happening. It is on record that Karl Popper lamented the general decline of rational culture, and Narlikar said that everything that passes as scientific truth does not enjoy objective evidence. See P. K. Mukhopadhyay 2006. See also Sellari 2000.

56 Grafton, Anthony, 2001. "The New Science and the Traditions of Humanism." p. 97.

57 See Egon Brunswik's *The Conceptual Framework of Psychology* (published 1952) is one of the very few of books that were actually written and published under the project of Encyclopedia of Unified Sciences. That this project died prematurely is a different issue. However, this book has found a place in the list of 100 most influential works in cognitive science of the twentieth century.

58 See P. K. Mukhopadhyay, History of Science, etc. It may further be noted that there is an opposite tendency even among some well established scholars. They argue that there was strong current of rationalism in India, but they seem to find evidence of it only in the Carvaka thought which they lament was sort of destroyed by the forces of religion and mysticism best represented by Vedanta. The result is the same; since at least the middle age India is an idealistic and mystical culture as is often said by the people of the scientific and rational West. Even if rationalism was once there in India, it is no longer. Both modern liberal Hindus and majority of the secular intellectuals of India today themselves ignore and tend to make the world forget that India developed many other highly rational, analytic and rigorous schools of thought with wide variety of visions and views. Many writings of scholars like Debiprasad Chattopadhyay and Amartya Sen may be cited as evidence of what some of today's secular Indian intellectuals are stated here to be thinking about India and her culture.

59 See Pacard, Vance, 1957. He notes how scientists are being engaged by industrialists to probe human weaknesses so that by utilizing that knowledge business men can design appropriate publicity and capture larger market.

60 As Rorty said, we can constantly draw the attention of the world to what the world needs – a world free from exploitation and violence. Economy should not weigh over humanity. "I suspect that the most socially useful thing we can do is continually draw the attention of the educated publics of our respective countries to the need for a global polity, which can develop some sort of countervailing power to that of the super-rich" (Rorty 1999, p. 233).

61 Even such purposes were not always authentic or honest. See Mukhopadhyay 1995.

62 A term used by Platt to describe current state of education in America. See Platt 1976.

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4 The predicament of the humanities

Reading through Bill Reading's *The University in Ruins*

Alok Rai

Bill Readings's *The University in Ruins* was published – posthumously, as it happens, brought to completion by a colleague – in 1996. It is a remarkable book in many ways – not least because it identifies and names features of the contemporary crisis of the academy well before they had become the rubbed-down currency of our present despair. Thus, it is all here – the ascendancy of the accountants, the resistless proliferation of management-speak such that the channels of communication are choked with vision statements and stakeholders and deliverables, the insidious and rarely noticed slippage from accountability to counting. But what is even more remarkable about Readings is that he identifies these still-crystallizing features, and locates them in a larger historical and ideological context. Further, he describes the consequent predicament of the academy – the university in ruins – without lapsing into elegy or nostalgia or, alternatively, breaking out into a futile and ultimately self-destructive rage. The world is what it is. These ruins *are* our given universe, the ineluctable landscape of our lives. Can we do anything to make it habitable?

There are, essentially, two questions to be asked about the current predicament: how did we get to this point? And where do we go from here? It is important, also, to recognize that our Indian predicament is *not* the same as the one described by Readings. There are parallels, of course, but also differences. And, living amid the flapping plastic and the corrugated tin sheets of our Dharavi – the colonial university, addled from the start, like our modernity – even the ruins of the European university can appear rather attractive. But I anticipate.

Readings develops his argument about the making of the current predicament through a brisk, shorthand account of the evolution of

the modern European university. Thus, somewhere at the outset, there is the Kantian institution committed to the pursuit of Reason:

> Kant founds the modern University on reason, and reason is what gives the University its universality in the modern sense . . . the unifying principle of the medieval University is theodicy . . . What distinguishes the modern University is a universal unifying principle that is *immanent* to the University. Kant ushers in the modernity of the University by naming this principle reason, which is to say that reason provides a *ratio* between the disciplines.
>
> (Readings 1996: 56)

The Kantian institution mutates, in time, into the Humboldtian university which

> draws its legitimacy from culture, which names the synthesis of teaching and research, process and product, history and reason, philology and criticism, historical scholarship and aesthetic experience, the institution and the individual. Thus the revelation of the idea of culture and the development of the individual are one. Object and process unite organically, and the place they unite is the University, which thus gives the people an idea of the nation-state to live up to and the nation-state a people capable of living up to that idea.
>
> (ibid., 65)

At this point, there is a crucial shift in Readings's argument, as marks the substitution of philosophy by literature in the University's cultural project. This is a complex process and involves several individuals, as well as several possible lines of development. (It is worth recalling, in particular, the names of Schleirmacher and Fichte.) This isn't quite the place to go into the whole story, but it may be tracked in Chapter 4 of Readings's book – 'The University and the Idea of Culture'. Readings cites Schlegel from the *Lectures on the History of Literature* that it is

> literature rather than philosophy that binds together a people into a nation, since philosophy tends to be both less nationally rooted . . . and more elitist: 'There is nothing so necessary [Readings quotes Schlegel] . . . to the whole intellectual existence of a nation, as the possession of a plentiful store of those national recollections and associations, which are lost in a great measure during the dark ages of infant society, but which forms the great

object of the poetical art to perpetuate and adorn . . . when a people are exalted in their feelings and ennobled in their own estimation, by the consciousness that they have been illustrious in ages that are gone by . . . in a word, that they have a national poetry of their own, we are willing to acknowledge that their pride is reasonable, and they are raised in our eyes by the same circumstances which give them elevation in their own.'

(ibid., 70–71)

However, Readings goes on to argue that this substitution is, also and importantly, an anglophone cultural project (ibid., 69) and, certainly, its consequences have been most far-reaching in anglophone and, we must expect, *ipso*, also in anglophone-*colonial* contexts. The names are familiar – Newman, Arnold, Leavis – and there is the inevitable invocation of C. P. Snow in the context of 'the founding split . . . between science and literary culture'. From the point of view of my argument here, this shift, this 'founding split' has several different kinds of significance. The first of these is a sharp disjunction between 'culture' and any kind of practical utility, which becomes progressively the exclusive domain of the sciences. Along with this, there is a weakening of the cognitive claim, particularly when it is camouflaged with high-sounding rhetoric – 'touchstones of civilization', etc. This is particularly evident in the contrast with the philosophy that has been 'substituted', displaced from its institutional centrality. In lieu of that weakened cognitive claim – truth – there is 'acculturation', a socialization into 'national culture' (see Baldick 1983; Graff 1987; Viswanathan 1989). This is, one must note, particularly problematic in the colony, where the claim to the national-universal is always-already vulnerable, even disingenuous. And, perhaps most crucially for me, in the matter of differences of interpretation, there is the emergence of the notion of 'consensus', as against 'proof'. The consensus of all right-thinking people – Leavis's famous 'that is so, isn't it?' – is advanced as a guarantee of truth or, if that is putting it too strongly, at least as the ground of the claim to assent. Our current predicament is located on the far side of the breakdown of this fragile equilibrium – i.e., consensus is not only not available, there is also some ambivalence about *finding* consensus. Seeking is all right – our impossible quest: to seek but not to find!

At least part of the current crisis derives from the growing irrelevance of the 'nation-state' in a time of globalization, except as a locus of resistance. This, again, becomes even more problematical in the colony and the post-colony, where the claim to the 'national', both

before and after independence, is unavailable except through willful acts of self-deception, and worse – as camouflage for fascist bullying. And to the extent that the self-validation of the liberal university derived from its role in respect of the definition and consolidation of 'national culture', it becomes progressively less available as the significance of the nation-state declines. Admittedly, the *post-colonial* university participates in this narrative only to a limited extent. The colonial university is, of course, riven by a fundamental flaw, in so far as it is the university of a subject nation. But even in the post-colonial university, the developmental project ensures that the utilitarian disciplines of science and technology command the greatest priority. (And to the extent that the humanities disciplines as instituted are disjunct from any larger project, they are merely a bureaucratic contingency, a traffic accident, not even tragedy.) However, the process of the marginalization of the nation-state is far from being ideologically neutral. The making of the world of globalization is underpinned by a powerful ideology which may, in somewhat confusing shorthand, be called 'liberalization'. Confusing, of course, because the ideology of liberalization is an important part of the complex process that undermines what, from the point of view of the humanities, we must (may?) call the 'liberal' university. The criterion of practical utility, so loftily forsworn by Newman and Arnold as being irrelevant for the cultivation of 'free men' – the real constituency of the 'liberal' arts – is the only criterion that is visible to the accountants of liberalization. The universal dominance of the accountants is part of much larger historical process, and our beloved and beleaguered 'liberal' university must still be considered only an incidental casualty, merely second-order, an unintended consequence.

This is hard to take, and we humanists occasionally seek to bolster our sense of importance by alluding to the threat that sundry tyrants have perceived as emanating from universities – Dacca in 1971, Santiago to Pinochet, Pol Pot's Cambodia. And there may well be something in that. In so far as universities can be and have been centers of independent thought, they have had, and been perceived to have, a subversive potential. So – poor consolation! – the current trivialization of tertiary education may well be an intentional part of the design – eliminating possible poles of resistance to the grand design to remake the globalized world in the image of capital. In this, universities are of no use, and even seek to get in the way from time to time.

But by far the most interesting part of Readings's argument relates to what has been happening within the academy itself. The last few decades may, plausibly, be seen as a time when theory (better, Theory)

rose to a kind of dominance that seems scarcely credible now. This is a large and complex story – but it may very broadly be summarized as a comprehensive and relentless critique of the lazy liberal-humanist universalism that underlay the traditional practice, particularly of literary studies – the master-discipline of the anglophone liberal academy. The suspicion of plausible, persuasive words – the arts of rhetoric, pleasure in the text, the tyranny of grammar even – derived from many sources. The success of Theory had many fathers – and mothers, too. The breakdown of the 'universalist' consensus seems, in retrospect, inevitable. The emergence of race, class, gender as relevant and even insistent axes of experience – and, in the Indian instance, caste, too – rendered that previous consensus merely insensitive and arrogant. It is true that the accents of Arnoldian nostalgia can still be heard from time to time – in the American canon debate, for instance, the famous 'culture wars' – but also, even, in dusty, raucous Indian classrooms, cacophonous with identity claims that demand to be heard above the din of other competing identity claims. But it is to Readings's credit that he is entirely free of that nostalgia, that longing for a lost, mythic wholeness. Instead, indeed, there is a kind of pride, an avowal of that theoretical critique which, driven by the intrusion of hitherto excluded experiences and perspectives, brought the house of 'culture' crashing down. Thus, in an important sense, we are the architects of these ruins, we are the ones who laid the charges – though it is possible that the demolition didn't go quite as we'd planned. But it is still worth saying – with some pride even – that we were the vandals who sacked Rome. Even as we are forced to acknowledge, in rueful retrospect, that we might even have functioned (objectively!) as accomplices of the accountants who disfigure the current landscape! After all, there appears to be a direct connection between the comprehensive 'deconstruction' under the influence of post-structuralist, post-modernist 'theory', and the emergence of that vacant space which was expeditiously annexed by the accountants with their simple-minded, flexible and empty – flexible *because* empty – norm: count whatever can be counted, and call it 'excellence'. In fact, Readings reports an absurd award for 'excellence' from Cornell given to the University Parking Services for having 'achieved a remarkable level of efficiency in *restricting* motor vehicle access!' (Reading 1996: 24).

However, irrespective of how one evaluates this moment – how one narrates the sequence by which we got to this point – whether one blames the busy moles of post-structuralist theory, nibbling away at the foundations, or, indeed, the accountants rampant, rising to dominance in the aftermath of 1989 – the fact of the matter is that there is

no going back, no return to any status quo ante. So where do we go from here?

It is important, at the outset, to identify the external pressures conducing towards a redefinition of the humanities in the emergent university. This redefinition is broadly in terms of a kind of cosmetic function, which may range all the way from handmaiden – 'service department' – to finishing school – elocution, 'communication skills'. At their most generous, the accountants are pleased to entrust the humanities with the responsibility for the inculcation of 'spiritual values'. This is a quasi-religious function, and carries awkward echoes of the way in which Newman/Arnold/Leavis saw the social role of literature, and the pedagogical function of literary study.

However, if we are not to be forced down those blind alleys of futility – deliciously close, I realize, to utility – then we must be able to reimagine a role for ourselves in the 'ruined' university. Readings's recommendation is eloquent, albeit short on specifics: 'Dwelling in the ruins of the University thus means giving a serious attention to the present complexity of its space, undertaking an endless work of *detournement* of the spaces willed to us by a history whose temporality we no longer inhabit. Like the inhabitants of some Italian city, we can seek neither to rebuild the Renaissance city-state nor to destroy its remnants and install rationally planned tower-blocks; we can seek only to put its angularities and winding passages to new uses, learning from and enjoying the cognitive dissonances that enclosed piazzas and non-signifying campanile induce' (ibid., 129).

Our present predicament – ring-fenced by the managers within the 'ruined' institution – consists of being stranded between, on the one hand, the lost, mythic universal, the object of futile nostalgia; and, on the other, the cacophony of 'absolutized difference', which leads the possibility of that paradoxical, even impossible institution, the 'rights university', in which non-intersecting discourses – gender, caste, race – are allowed to coexist, subject only to the dominion of the accountants and their empty, and so endlessly manipulable, universal criterion, 'excellence': 'excellence has no content to call its own . . . Its very lack of reference allows excellence to function as a principle of translatability between radically different idioms' (ibid., 24).

Both the extremes – the smug universality of the past, as well as the cacophonous non-intersecting discourses of the 'rights university' – are, to my mind, unacceptable, and cannot be reconciled with any meaningful practice of the humanities. The good thing about Readings is his tough-minded refusal to get all nostalgic about the liberal-humanist world that *we* laid waste – to fall into Newmanesque longing for an

idea of the University that we (perhaps, also) rendered untenable. There are, mercifully, other options that open up amid the debris of the exploded 'universal'. One of these, of course, is to milk the 'liberal guilt' of the white (generally male and, in India, *savarna*) beneficiaries of the earlier naïve or hypocritical universalism and luxuriate in the multiplication of identities. This kind of myopic role-playing can, of course, fit quite easily into the ideological economy of globalization, of 'late capitalism' – thus, in place of the coercive 'universalism' of the past era of colonialism, we get the cosmetic multiculturalism – the absolutization and celebration of difference, and the implicit denial of *relation* – which is, I suggest, founded on a deep *in*difference.

The quest as I see it is for some optimal point between cognitive certainty and a cognitive modesty that is perilously close to abdication. (The identity discourses are an unsettling hybrid of cognitive certainty and cognitive abdication!) If our forebears were guilty of too much certainty, the smug and/or hypocritical assurance that they knew and could know the truth, and that the truth was what they knew, our own and childish insistence that truth is only a fiction, that truth is unknowable is, after all, just one gigantic sulk. After all, even the most po-mo of po-mo, who cannot utter 'truth' without giving it horns, still have and deploy an idea of untruth, of lies. And no matter how po-mo we feel on any particular day, we work – after Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* – with some idea of truth, some truth *adequate* to the materials and to our purposes. And the idea should be to extend those purposes, to remedy its exclusions, rather than to rejoice in the mere fact of destruction – sort of Nietzsche Lite.

We cannot help remarking, once again, the remarkable consonance between globalization and the ruin of the university, between 'liberalization' and the destruction of the 'liberal' university. Clearly, this ruin and its origins are narrated differently, and we lit-folk put ourselves at the center of it. But this consonance could hardly be a coincidence. The vastly exaggerated demise of nations and nationalism could hardly be it – because of course, rhetoric apart, nations and nationalisms are both, in different ways and in different places, alive and well and kicking and screaming. What appears rather more evident is the inhibition of the raising even of the large, global questions – questions that can call the whole process to mind and examine it. Instead, we have celebrations of local knowledges, cute particularisms. And meanwhile, the managers move in . . .

But between the two poles of cognitive certainty and cognitive abdication lies that essential domain of meaning and value which the humanities have from time to time, sought to deny, and sought to

escape from, into some kind of bogus scientificity. The question of values is central to my argument here – but not quite in the way that it is often deployed by the accountants and the engineers. Thus, aside from those incense-laden 'spiritual values', for this this latter lot, values *vitiate* knowledge – so *only* that is knowledge which is *not* vitiated by values. This is the tendency that has, occasionally, been described as the 'physics envy' that affects insecure humanists, and renders them vulnerable to the seduction of scientificity. But on the other hand, there is the specter of anomie, the accumulating panic about our blind world, lurching to catastrophe – from which even the accountants are not immune. Values are the great emollient, the balm, etc. Somehow, they will, and must, and can heal the wounds of our late-capitalist modernity. And that, we are told is the true task of humanities education. And if it should fail – *as it must, in the face of the world in which it is situated* – why, so much the worse for humanities education, for what else is it good for?

One way of thinking about all this, for me, is through the notion of narrative, through the necessary relation between narrative and consent, i.e., consensus. Narrative only works if, and only to the extent that, it is able to create, howsoever provisionally and temporarily, consent – 'the suspension of disbelief', in Coleridge's famous phrase. This consensus, however – as was emphatically pointed out to me in Sri Lanka when I sought to suggest some parallel between narrative consensus and the implicit consensus of democracy – smacks of that earlier smug universalism of powerful, dominant, hegemonic groups. (My Sri Lanka paper was called, innocently, 'The Democracy of Literature', but my romantic formulation left little room for accommodating the violence still raging in the north.) This notion of consensus is also, I realize, embarrassingly reminiscent of Leavis's famous enunciation of the standard of verity appropriate to literary studies – 'That is so, isn't it?'

Later, in a book that he was unable to finish, Readings develops a notion of a pedagogy of 'dissensus' to replace the former 'consensus'. Gerald Graff's recommendation is more direct: 'Teach the conflicts'. And it is in the light of this injunction that I understand Readings's recommendation of the pedagogy of dissensus as being, perhaps, the core function of the 'ruined' University: the destructive testing of the necessary myths of our shared, common lives. We need consensus *because* we don't inhabit parallel, coexistent worlds – at the end of the day, and during it too, we also inhabit one, contested, world. And in that contest – dissensus – there is also the implicit recognition of commonness, sharedness, relation. So dissensus is the means, consensus is

the goal, the horizon, the unreachable (?) point of yearning. Thus, he writes about the unending web of obligation:

> in the horizon of dissensus, no consensual answer can take away the question mark that the social bond (the fact of other people, of language) raises. No universal community can embody the answer; no rational consensus can decide simply to agree on an answer. To preserve the status of the social bond as a question is to tolerate difference without recourse to an idea of identity . . . It is to understand the obligation of community as one to which we are answerable but to which we cannot supply an answer.
>
> (ibid., 187)

I am reminded of my unwritten paper on the way in which we are constantly explaining – narrativizing, theorizing – each other. And most of the time this is inconsequential and unnoticed – until, that is, we are forced into a relationship – or, more accurately, forced to recognize the relationship that inevitably exists, merely by virtue of the fact that we exist as fellow creatures. So, while the grand narratives have lost their force – and for that we too may claim some credit, but most of that 'credit' must of course go to the massive 'discredit' that those grand narratives had no way of accommodating – the loss of the grand narratives has not abrogated the *need* for some narrative – perhaps not grand, but not *too* modest either, because it must be adequate to our unifying, global world. So, willy-nilly, we find ourselves nudging the universal – nudging towards the universal. Slouching towards – what?

Conflict over interpretation and meaning, over apparently irreconcilable values, patient negotiation through conversation, speaking and being spoken to (and sometimes at), these are not embarrassments that can be transcended through some combination of skill and fortune – they are *constitutive* of our humanity. And in so far as we are required to live with our differences, share a world with different others, the rules of engagement and intercourse must involve a constant labor that can only be the business of humanists. But, let it be said, humanities departments are just as likely to forget this as are the accountants. Still, the question of values is where the educational discourse of the accountants shows its weakness. They cannot *not* be concerned. And there is no way of being concerned that is coherent with their larger discourse – other than the sermons they recommend, under various names. Because in engaging with values one is forced to encounter both the inevitable and necessary limitation of our knowledges, but also the need still to remain concerned because in the paradoxical

contentiousness of values, our common, shared world is acknowledged: *not knowing what is right, needing to know what is right*. If one or the other were not the case, we could all go our different ways, and there would be no need to engage with each others beliefs and values at all.

My time as a professor at the IIT Delhi provided me with a sharp example of the fundamental pedagogical issue that lies at the base of these alternative notions of education. The occasion was a discussion in the Senate *a propos* a course on 'Current Moral Issues' proposed by the Humanities Department. The good engineers wanted to know whether these 'issues' – euthanasia, suicide, sexuality – had been 'resolved'. On being told that they were in fact, 'issues' of current concern, were in fact currently the subject of impassioned debate and argument, they recommended in all seriousness that the course be shelved '*for the time being*' – in fact, be shelved only *until* the time that the issues had been finally resolved. Then the students could be given the achieved fruits of stable knowledge, and not merely be inculcated into the protocols of reasoned argument, socialized into the culture of ideas, into thinking!

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5 Humanities in the age of their digital operability

Amlan Das Gupta

In 2013 the School of Cultural Texts and Records at Jadavpur University introduced a post-graduate diploma course in digital humanities and cultural informatics. This is the first venture, as far as we are aware, in India in curricularizing an area that is occupying increasing institutional space in western universities. More and more colleges and universities in America and Europe are opening centres or units in this field: though it may be that the number of formal taught courses is still not very large. The term *digital humanities* has been around for a while now, and has subsumed earlier fields like humanities computing and computational humanities, which of course have a much longer history, having been around since the middle of the twentieth century. The reason for proposing such a course was the perception that in India neither digital humanities nor cultural informatics have been systematically developed, nor any academic course devoted to it. There appears to be a profound technological divide – visible in a university with a large technology faculty like ours – because of which curricula in technology and the humanities remain isolated from each other. Yet given that the management of digital technologies appropriate to the humanities and systematic development of cultural informatics is obviously a field of considerable, and growing, importance in India, a structured course was thought to be desirable. As we pursued what broadly might be described as digital humanities projects over the last 10 years or so, we found that as workers in these fields we were obliged to acquire our skills piecemeal, thus restricting the range and innovation in any single field. It was also preventing us from developing a theoretical and conceptual base to enable research and development of our own, especially as directed to the Indian languages and other specifically Indian codes and structures of cultural expression. The principal objectives of the course were thought to be as follows:

1 to familiarize students with the principles, objectives, scope and processes of digital archiving, documentation and data processing;

2 to develop practical skills in electronic archiving, processing, editing and on-screen presentation of cultural material on a variety of platforms and for varied communities of users;
3 to train students in the application of textual, editorial and communication theory to technical situations, so that they can produce high quality work in linguistic and cultural fields in a digital environment.

Given that most available technologies and indeed the thrust of research in digital humanities is concerned with specifically western cultural material, our experience showed us that we were facing a number of challenges all at once: of creating a body of digitized cultural material, of creating tools capable of processing this material, and of theorizing the problems of our own cultural experience. The reflections that I offer thus come out of my experience as a worker in the School of Cultural Texts and Records over the last decade generally, and more recently, our attempts to curricularize these rather disparate kinds of activity.

Few would dispute today that the way in which we experience the humanities is strongly mediated by digital technology. This has not only to do with whether we are comfortable using computers for our everyday work: quite obviously the methods of research and study are themselves shaped and enabled by such means. The libraries that we use, the resources that we access, the forms of communication that we are forced to adopt to survive in our professional fields habitually involve digital technology: and even if we try to consciously avoid such use – write with pen and paper, read printed books, use card catalogues – the books that we use if printed in the last 15 years or so are likely to have been composed on computers rather than letter presses. As such we inhabit what might be called a condition of *digitality*, as constitutive of our work as students of the humanities as those created by earlier revolutions in the technologies of knowledge: the coming of the printed book, for instance, or earlier media for mechanical reproduction of sound or image. There may some justice in thinking that one is born into a certain state of technology and shaped by it: newer incursions upon our habits and patterns of behaviour are confusing and difficult to adjust to. Of course, this may be experienced in certain disciplines and fields of activity more strongly than in others. As one of my areas of interest is sound recording, I have felt that the media in which sound is held counts for a great deal, and of course the story of the development of sound recording is a story of changes in media. Those whose musical tastes were formed in the era of shellac

recording find the sound imprints in later media, even vinyl, unsatisfactory: and those who grew up in the vinyl era find the cassette tape or the compact disc similarly inadequate. Yet inevitably one might think the fear of technological obsolescence may force us to reconfigure sound from analogue carriers in digital space: perhaps the same is, in varying degrees true of other spheres of activity as well. Card indexes may be dying a slow but inevitable death: fountain pens may be now a fashionable luxury.

The digital mediation of knowledge may be now impacting the very way in which humanities research is thought of, affecting as David Berry says 'the epistemologies and ontologies that underlie a research programme' (Berry 2012: 1). There is little scope for scholars to avoid using digital aids in a modern knowledge economy. We are thus all at least *weakly* digital, which is tied up with our ability to function at all as students and researchers. While some might still mourn the loss of old scholarly habits, or even the older appurtenances of scholarship, many if not most of us have made our peace with the new dispensation. There is no doubt that the *habitus* of scholarship is not to be lightly dismissed: one might genuinely feel that it is easier or more convenient to use printed books than their digital surrogates, or physical archives than digital ones. The problem is when the question takes on a kind of self-righteousness, as if there is something inherently better or worse in reading a printed book. There is no doubting that potentially at any rate scholarly resources have become both more plentiful and easier to access. I am sure that many of us are familiar if not comfortable with working with huge quantities of articles, books and other scholarly resources at our fingertips. Most humanities scholars – and this is probably true not only of our own country – are *users*, and the only distinction among them is in the facility for using digital tools. A smaller number are *makers* too, able to create tools specific for their own research purposes, and to effortlessly and creatively tackle the wealth of digital material. There is a perception, perhaps not entirely unjustified, that the digital humanist today is more digital than humanist: though the number of honourable exceptions to this general proposition is noteworthy and definitely on the increase.

Nevertheless the real problem might appear to be one of *poros* than of *penia*, of overmuch than of too little. In the early seventeenth century the prose writer Robert Burton felt inundated by the incursions of printed matter: 'a vast confusion of vowes, wishes, actions, edicts, petitions, law-suits, pleas, lawes, proclamations, complaints, grievances – are dayly brought to our ears: new bookes every day, pamphlets, currantoes, stories, whole catalogues of volumes of all sorts,

new paradoxes, opinions, schisms, heresies, controversies in philosophy, religion, &c' (Burton 1806: 5). The sheer bulk of textual matter that confronts us today may be immeasurably greater, but then each moment of technological change breeds its version of the marvellous. Earlier habits of humanities research, particularly in our country, were often attended by conditions of scholarly deprivation, with fairly obvious limits to the amount of material available: for those who could not easily access the large scholarly repositories of the west, obviously only certain kinds of research questions could be addressed and not others. But even more importantly I think – and this is true for even for those who were happily able to gain access to all the material they could need, the very methodology of working in physical archives imposed a certain restrictiveness of approach that was in itself constitutive of scholarly precision. Each of us will have a story, or many of them, of tracking down a recalcitrant book or reference. Much of that is already a thing of the past: and taking as given some of the resources normally funded by the state for academics like us, we can have a fairly adequate research environment in the comfort of our university offices or even residences.

Let me quote from a recent article by the well-known literary critic Stanley Fish, published in the *New York Times* (23 January 2013). Fish is here taking arms against (what he construes as) the fashionable stances of the 'digital humanities':

> But whatever vision of the digital humanities is proclaimed, it will have little place for the likes of me and for the kind of criticism I practice: a criticism that narrows meaning to the significances designed by an author, a criticism that generalizes from a text as small as half a line, a criticism that insists on the distinction between the true and the false, between what is relevant and what is noise, between what is serious and what is mere play.[1]

As we have written elsewhere, it seems that while Fish is here taking issue with the claims of the 'digital humanities', his real quarrel appears to be with the functioning of the new *umanista*, not those who can just about access articles on JSTOR.[2] But then, are there digital humanists and digital humanists? Do we recognize ourselves in the Twitter-happy digital 'insurgents' that Stanley Fish describes? Let us briefly dwell on the techniques that have become popular in dealing with large datasets. Franco Moretti famously advocates that given the enormous amount of digitized data available to us and clamouring for our attention the answer is clearly this: don't read it. Crunch it. With

digital tools enabling us to process vast quantities of data in the proverbial twinkling of an eye, the research question itself can be posed in ways that are unprecedented. Here is a flattering and positive assessment of Moretti's idea of *distant reading*:

> Having performed a count of definite and indefinite articles in the titles of various genres of 19th-century fiction, Moretti discovers that the definite article predominates in titles of anti-Jacobin novels (outnumbering indefinite articles 36 percent to 3 percent), while the indefinite is more common in titles of New Woman novels, appearing there 10 times as often. Why should this be? Elementary, my dear Watson. The linguistic function of articles is to direct a reader's attention either backward, toward the already established, or forward, toward a new and unknown thing. The anti-Jacobin novel depends on received ideas, the New Woman novel on an encounter with something unprecedented. Moretti is ever alert for such puzzling quirks in the data, and never at a loss for the nifty Holmesian explanation.
>
> (J F English, "Morettian Picaresque", *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 27 June 27 2013)[3]

Fish rather acidly describes the 'attitudes' that the digital humanist adopts as being at once apocalyptic and survivalist: 'It is the double claim always made by an insurgent movement. We are a beleaguered minority and we are also the saving remnant'. I shall avoid the further ramifications of the debate between the so-called 'traditional' and digital humanities, as being both predictable and frequently wrong-headed. Both sides appear to show prejudice and obstinacy in equal measure. I would however like to consider the *condition* of digital data in a somewhat schematic manner.

In the broadest possible sense digital scholarly material may be divided into two large masses: the digitized and the born digital. The distinction also reflects broadly the thrust of the two phases in the history of the digital humanities. Todd Presner, one of the authors of the *Digital Humanities Manifesto* – truly, in the manner of manifestos, a call to revolution – writes in a 2010 document:

> the first wave of Digital Humanities scholarship in the late 1990s and early 2000s tended to focus on large-scale digitization projects and the establishment of technological infrastructure, [while] the current second wave of Digital Humanities – what can be called "Digital Humanities 2.0" – is deeply generative, creating

> the environments and tools for producing, curating, and interacting with knowledge that is "born digital" and lives in various digital contexts. While the first wave of Digital Humanities concentrated, perhaps somewhat narrowly, on text analysis (such as classification systems, mark-up, text encoding, and scholarly editing) within established disciplines, Digital Humanities 2.0 introduces entirely new disciplinary paradigms, convergent fields, hybrid methodologies, and even new publication models that are often not derived from or limited to print culture.
>
> (Presner 2010, quoted in Berry (2012): 3

The distinction is actually quite fundamental for understanding what we can do with digital material. I shall confine myself here to a discussion of verbal texts, though the argument may be extended in parts at any rate to other kinds such as audio or audio visual. What we encounter in digital form is actually quite disparate in the kinds of use that they offer us. All digital material, whether carried over from physical text objects, or generated within the digital space, share certain defining characteristics. In a very fundamental sense, they are without form or lineament, and exist outside memory or affect: nevertheless, they can be endlessly simulated, visualized, auralized and replicated. In some cases they may be added or subtracted from. That which is born digital may have no obvious referent in the world of material objects of the kind that a scan or a digital photograph of a document does. The term 'digital surrogate' is commonly in use for the latter kind, though it may be justly said that the term fails to fully convey the sense that digitized objects are not lesser or greater than their physical counterparts but different from them: different in the uses they permit. It is here that the university as the location for the *academic* pursuit of digital humanities becomes important: for whereas all sorts of public institutions build archives, the university is the space which allows sustained critical reflection on its methods and principles and promotes the use of the archive as a research archive. It is here that new protocols of metadata must be devised, new tools for visualization and collation generated. Fish, in his disquisition, issues salutary warnings but is also guilty of disregarding here the possibility that the deployment of digital tools might result in the perception of new problems for purely human consideration: that the near-limitless powers of aggregation and consolidation that computers provide might in fact locate another – or many – of such singularities that he bases his critical practice on.

Let us then try to think a little more clearly about our encounters with textual material on our digital devices. All text, one might say,

is either machine readable or not so: in other words, they may exist as graphical signs which can be further processed by wide range of digital tools or as visual blocks which do not allow us further access to its content like a scanned image or a digital photograph, or larger composites made up of these building blocks. There may be a certain level of convertibility between the two: for instance, the scan or PDF document may be processed through an optical character recognition programme which will yield, subject to certain conditions, a chunk of machine readable text. On the other hand, some one might wish to copy a page from a volume in Google Books – itself searchable and machine compliant but not on the face of it reproducible – by generating a screen shot of it, which will operate in the first instance only as a single entity. Yet, even as we consider these options – and indeed generally in thinking about digital textual material – two possible forms of restriction must be kept in mind – that of *form* and that of *platform*. These appear to be related and often difficult to distinguish: is the machine readable text in UTF-8 or in ASCII? Is it marked up or is it in plain text? Is it in a font set that some systems recognize and others don't? Many of us will have experienced the problems earlier platforms have in dealing with newer versions: e-book formats are notoriously varied and many demand the use of dedicated e-book readers.

However, we encounter the digital text object – whether in a relatively intractable form like a digital image, or in a properly machine readable form – there are some very real benefits that we have become accustomed to expect. All digital material – generally speaking – is capable of being infinitely reproduced without further loss of fidelity; Scalability is another major advantage: a high resolution archival image can be scaled down to a manageable low-resolution form that might serve to fulfil a broad range of purposes. This makes for greater portability of material, but of course this scalability can operate only in one direction: a low resolution image cannot be turned into a high resolution one. With machine readable text, the options go up considerably. The text can be processed, tagged, searched, collated, at levels ranging from the smallest imaginable linguistic units to very large ones. A fundamental resource for the study of early modern English literature is the web-based Early English Books Online, hitherto offering PDF images of something like 70,000 books published between 1475 and 1700. Recently a large part of it – about 40,000 – is being made available (through the Text Creation Partnership spearheaded by the Michigan University) as fully marked-up text using a simple TEI protocol termed Document Type Description (DTD). This would naturally facilitate scholarly use of this resource. Similarly, the *Bichitra* website, undertaken by the school I work at, now offers both

images and transcriptions of all available manuscripts and substantive printed works of Rabindranath Tagore, along with tools for search, filtering and collation, thus laying the ground for new scholarly work. Large bodies of information can be conveniently managed and for all effective purposes the entirety of the World Wide Web can be treated as a single resource for hyper-linking and cross-referencing. 'Distant' reading of unimaginably large corpora of texts of the kind proposed by Moretti can now supplement close textual analysis.

But everything comes with a price, and a responsibility. The use of digital data, particularly in university settings, creates new issues about rights management and ownership. Does metadata have its limits? Or can we create a mark-up which perfectly conveys the state of a manuscript page? There are foolproof ways of marking deletions in a manuscript in an XML document, but would those be adequate to convey the magic of one of Tagore's manuscript pages with the deletions taking on a wholly new life of their own? The most troubling considerations are the ephemerality and constant fear of obsolescence in the digital sphere. What kinds of futures can be proposed for digital artefacts? I will not waste more time listing other problems and issues that attend the digital condition. Some are obvious and much discussed, others are undoubtedly yet to be encountered. The fact is that the digital turn in the humanities appears at least at the present time to be an irreversible one. The best thing for a humanities faculty would be to engage with it head-on, and engage – even within this ephemeral and shifting digital space – in the critical labour of enduring value.

Notes

1 Accessed electronically on http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/23/mind-your-ps-and-bs-the-digital-humanities-and-interpretation/
2 A. Das Gupta and S. Sinha. (2013). *The Digital Object of Desire*. http://humanitiesunderground.org/the-digital-object-of-desire/
3 Accessed electronically at http://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/franco-morettis-distant-reading-a-symposium

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6 The indispensability of humanities[1]

Rajeev Bhargava

We live in a period marked by a profound crisis in education. Education, virtually everywhere, is increasingly treated solely in terms of its employability quotient, how it helps us secure jobs, which in turn are viewed as instruments of greater material prosperity for individuals, at best in terms of how they contribute to increasing national assets-GDP, bigger profits and greater power (Nussbaum 2010). The skills relevant to these objectives emanate from and feed into cost-benefit analysis, social engineering and technocratic management. In such a context, a vital, perhaps the most important function of education, cultivating humanity, to use Martha Nussbaum's phrase, is neglected (Nussbaum 1997). Several valuable capacities of human beings, sorely needed in our times, such as the ability to understand the perspectives of others by their own lights, to understand and imagine their sufferings and predicaments, to become multi-lingual and multi-cultural and thereby rise above one's own provincialities, to respect plurality and learn the social uses of reason that help us explore new forms and levels of agreements or live with reasonable disagreements, to critically examine received knowledge, to make sound judgment in the face of complex dilemmas, to achieve greater self-understanding – all the faculties of thought and imagination that enrich us as well as our relationships with others – in short, all the humanist aspects of education are ignored or sidelined. This forms the background of my chapter, not its content. My objective is limited, its intellectual context narrower. My claim is that only a bad model of social science, one that emulates a particularly bad model of natural sciences makes a neat separation between itself and the humanities and pushes the latter onto the margins. A more adequate and decent model of social science is grounded in the realisation that it cannot do without the humanities, that humanities are constitutive of the social sciences. Ever so often in the human sciences, to understand *is* to explain and at other

times, understanding is prior to and a necessary condition of explanation. And this human understanding – whether of one's own self or of others – where 'a mind grasps another mind', to use Charles Taylor's felicitous phrase (Taylor 1985), is the core of humanities.

Recently, I stumbled upon a John Freeman BBC Interview of 1959 with Bertrand Russell. 'Suppose that this interview was seen by young viewers a thousand years later like a dead sea scroll, what would you like to tell them about the life you have lived and the lessons you have learnt?' Freeman asks Russell at the very end of the program. Russell answers,

> 'Two things, one moral, the other intellectual. The moral: Love is wise, hatred is foolish . . . Without toleration of views and ways of life radically different from our own, we shall not be able to live together. These qualities – toleration and interpretative charity – are crucial to the continuation of human life on this planet.' He continues, 'The intellectual thing is this: when you are studying any matter ask yourself only – what are the facts? . . . Never let yourself be diverted either by what you wish to believe or what you believe might happen if it was to be socially effective. Look solely and only at what are the facts.'[2]

Human beings have countless qualities. They are moved by interests but also by emotions and ideals, by love for as well as hatred of others. They have a capacity for wickedness and malice as also for compassion, generosity, dignity and freedom, a cunning capacity to deceive others as well as aspiration to be truthful and towards moral and intellectual integrity, a sense of justice as well as a reckless instinct for self-affirmation by humiliating others, a capacity for continual self-denial but also honest self-appraisal, for revenge as well as a sense of remorse and an ability to forgive others, an sense of moral responsibility and self-transcendence, both a creative and a destructive imagination. They store information, have cultural memory that plays in shaping their motivations. The list is endless. To apprehend them requires imagination, insight, instinct, perspicacity, sympathy, interpretative skills. Mere reason and observation won't do. Wilfred Cantwell Smith is worth quoting here: 'It strikes me as rather stupid to propound or put up with theories that, whether in their presupposition or in their conclusion, or both, fail to do justice to these *facts* . . . A social science that ignores these facts gives science a bad name' (Smith 1997: 126).

In what follows I argue that in order to do justice to these facts, philosophy, art and religion, all these modes of self-understanding that

form a large chunk of the humanities, are indispensable. Social science is empty without the humanities.

Philosophy

Allow me to begin then with a few truisms. No one denies that we are physical creatures, part of the physical universe and subject to the same laws of physics that apply to other physical objects. Nor will anyone deny that unlike purely physical objects but like other biological creatures: we breathe, we grow and have sensory experience. We are sentient creatures: However, what distinguishes us from most, though perhaps not all biological creatures is that we are concept-bearing animals. We are born in a world that is already conceptually arranged in particular ways. Consider the following. A child is told to sit at a table. From a purely physical point of view, tables are just the material of which they are made, say wood, nothing else. But it would be odd and deeply puzzling to tell the child to sit at a piece of wood. This instruction is simply too vague and fuzzy to get the child to do anything. What we wish to convey to the child is that a particular piece of wood when crafted and arranged in a particular manner – flat top with one or more legs – serves a particular purpose, namely with which we can do certain things such as eating, reading, writing, talking and so on. These particular purposes are crucial to understand what we wish the child to do because there may be other objects such as a bench with a flat surface and legs with which we do an entirely different thing – it is meant to seat one or more persons. These purposes and the relevant distinction between tables and benches would not exist unless conceptually formulated. This, of course, is true not only of objects such as chairs, tables, blackboard, chalk, the classroom in the school building but also of human beings themselves. Consider a class room interaction. The statement 'Biological organisms intermittently uttering sounds' might be descriptively true but conveys nothing about what is going on. There is no human understanding in the statement. 'A person interacting with a group in a room' might be descriptively true and communicative of something human but still fails to express or communicate what specifically in this context needs to be understood. The conceptual world of a child who has spent even a little time in a school is much finer. She knows that she is in a class room – not just any room – learning with other learners (students) from a teacher. The child already possesses an understanding of a web of social relationships and the social roles defined by them. The person facing the child in the class room is not any odd guy but a teacher.

And she knows she is learning with not just any motley crowd of kids but class mates/fellow students and so on. Once again, no teaching is possible unless all of us already have a rough idea of the social role of students and teachers. The same is true of bus conductors, drivers, ticket inspectors, shopkeepers, government officials and so on. A society cannot function without these elementary understandings and so every child is initiated into the social world by an informal instruction in these concepts. Unlike the purely physical, chemical or the biological world, the human world is conceptual through and through. Plants and most lower order animals live in the world and sense it; however, by virtue of living the world through concepts, humans do not merely have sensory experience. Because their experience is mediated by concepts, we might say that human experience is always laden with thought and meaning. Humans do not merely live but have thoughtful experience in the life-world – what we might call *lived experience*. What to us appears as immediate experience of a red chair, a computer, a medical doctor, a painting is always already mediated by meaning and significance.

These, as I said, are truisms. Here are some more. An action, it is said, is distinguished from mere behaviour because it is guided by intention. An intention, like virtually all mental phenomena, is what it is because it is directed towards an object, is always about something. One does not just intend. One intends to, for example, walk. All intentions have a content – walking but not standing, sitting or running. Thus, it involves grasping what specifically it is do X rather than Y or Z, and thus drawing boundaries, marking distinctions, in short, formulating and understanding concepts, and since this conceptual content is almost always linguistically mediated, can only be individuated by word-meaning, we might say that it has a linguistic or propositional content. All intentions are concept-laden and word-dependent and therefore meaningful, and since, as mentioned earlier, an action is always guided by intention, we can say that actions are meaningful, concept-laden and word-dependent. If our aim is to study humans, their actions and interactions, the entire network of social relations, and if these are invariably constituted by concepts, then knowing the web of concepts that constitute these actions and interactions is not an optional extra but absolutely indispensable.

Now it is well known that this actively self-reflexive concern with the internal structure of concepts, with how concepts relate to one another and come in clusters, how in turn they mark boundaries and therefore distinctions is a major preoccupation of philosophers, an integral feature of what philosophers do. They focus on the meaning

of words, on the way different words are used. For instance, social and political philosophers are obsessively concerned with what Justice is, i.e., the meanings of the term *justice* and how it is related to other normative concepts such as *equality* and *freedom* or what is meant by *social revolution* and how it is different from *social reform* or *engineering*. So, in effect, for the social scientist, philosophical activity is not something that she may opt not to do but rather indispensable for understanding the human world.

Let me illustrate this further with an example. Suppose that someone gives a call for freedom: we should all be free! What are the listeners to make of this call? For a start they must understand what it means to be free. Once they have understood the meaning or rather the different meanings of freedom, they may ask why they should be free or at least why they should be free in this rather than in some other sense. (Sometime ago, some traditions of political theory reduced it to analysis of political concepts, but the significance of such analysis is considerably reduced if it is not included in and used to clarify larger political arguments.) To be free of or from something is to get rid of it. What you wish to get rid of must be something that you evaluate negatively. In the literature on freedom, such things that you wish to get rid of are usually called constraints. So, to be free is to be free from constraints. But what is the nature of these constraints? Surely, our ideas of freedom will depend upon our understanding of what these constraints are. Are these constraints purely physical? Take the paradigmatic example of freedom. A man is in chains. Get rid of the chains and he is free. The same is true of birds in a cage. The cage is imprisoning, restricting the flight of the bird; that which it is most prone to doing and is its nature. To set the bird free is to get rid of the cage. In the same way prisoners are set free when they are released. Have you noticed that our notion of constraint may already have changed with this last example? For at issue here is not merely the idea of physical but of legal constraints. A person may have been put behind bars because he was caught stealing. He stole because he was physically free to steal and yet he was imprisoned because it is illegal to do so. Appropriating a thing that by law belongs to another is illegal, and it is because of the presence of this legal constraint that the man was put in jail. To be free then is to be free not just from physical but from legal constraints.

Is this all there is to freedom? Notice that both physical and legal constraints are external to the agent. Can a person be unfree not because of the presence of physical and legal constraints – there may be none – but by virtue of psychological barriers, obstructions that

are present within his mental make-up. So, consider a slave who is set free and who is now pronounced as formally equal to his former master. Suppose that they both compete in an open exam, and while the former master always does well, the former slave simply cannot perform. Centuries of slavery have taken away from him the basic self-confidence required for a good performance. He is unable to achieve his objectives not because of physical or legal constraints but due to internal psychological ones. A conception of freedom that conceives freedom in purely physical or legal terms is unable to capture the mechanism of unfreedom which is at work here. We can similarly talk about constraints which are neither purely external nor purely internal but a bit of both – I mean social constraints. A person is physically and legally free to enter the higher education system. He has done well in his school examinations, well enough to get a place in a decent college. But higher education is costly. There are no subsidies or scholarships. The person is confident that he would do well and he has every reason to feel so. And yet he cannot get higher education. He is severely handicapped by his relative poverty which is a major socio-economic constraint on what he wishes to do. Implicit in this is a still different conception of freedom: freedom from not merely physical, legal and psychological but also socio-economic constraints.

Hitherto we have focused on constraints. However, our conception of freedom changes with our ideas about what we should do once freed from constraints. Some argue that it is enough that we are able to fulfil whatever we happen to currently desire. So, if I desire to smoke and no constraints exist to prevent me from doing so, then I am free. Others argue that by a focus on current unevaluated desires we misunderstand what is really at issue in discussions of freedom. Such people work with a less instrumentalist, more robust conception of reason and argue that one is free only when there is absence of constraints and a real opportunity to do what we evaluate to be good for us. On this view, if information that cigarettes are gravely injurious to health is available to us but we continue to both desire smoking and fulfil this desire then we are not really being free. We are not free because we succumb to a habit or addiction completely bypassing, ignoring or evading what our reason says is good for us. To fall prey to one's current unevaluated desires, on this view, is to be in a state of unfreedom. Freedom is a condition of leading a life and of doing things that are evaluated to be good for us, to fulfil desires that are judged to be worth having in the first place. This view slowly leads to the idea that freedom is identical with self-realization. The detailed elaboration of different conceptions of freedom is one task of a branch of philosophy,

namely political philosophy. But this is closely linked to, as can be seen from our discussion, to the thought and practice of ordinary people, with their collective aspirations and normative goals.

So, here is my first, not so original but still important, claim that philosophy is indispensable for the social sciences and since by any reckoning philosophy is considered to be part of the humanities, at least an important segment of the humanities has been shown to be indispensable to the social sciences.

The mythic and the mimetic

But does the study of concepts help us understand all of human phenomena? It is, of course, true that being human, living in a human world is deeply and inextricably linked to having and using concepts, but it is a typical philosophical fallacy to believe that the conceptual world of humans is entirely word-dependent (as, indeed, I myself have been supposing in the discussion above), a product of active reasoning and intellection, that it is arranged by reflectively classifying objects, events and ideas, by comparing and contrasting mental categories that contain concept-relevant features with those that do not contain such qualities. Besides, this form of active intellection presupposes not only a high degree of development of the capacities of abstract thinking, a certain kind of rationality but also a written culture in which memory is stored in external media such as inscriptions and manuscripts. In some instances, concept formation and usage is linked further to an evidence-based analytical approach – as if the use of concepts is always linked to analytical rigour, argumentative discursive practices and careful definition of terms. In short, philosophical activity is here equated with what Merlin Donald has called 'theoretic culture' (Donald 2012).

A further stadial consciousness is then built into human understanding that this kind of philosophical activity is superior to other forms of concept usage and pre-conceptual grasp of the world. Indeed, among many a tendency exists to reduce the pre-conceptual to the conceptual, as if it has no existence at all.

Nothing could be further than the truth. While this kind of philosophical activity, as I have shown, has its use in the social sciences and, in some domains, is indispensable, neither the study of the human world nor the humanities are exhausted by it. At any rate, conceptual understanding is a type of philosophical activity that is not the exclusive preserve of an elite minority of philosophers teaching in philosophy departments. The indispensability of philosophy means that any

good social science necessarily involves it and therefore that any good social scientist necessarily does it, regardless of the discipline to which she belongs.

My more important point is different, though and is ably captured by a term reintroduced in contemporary academic discourse by the philosopher, Charles Taylor – social imaginaries (Taylor 2004). To understand the world of humans, their actions, interactions and the social and material universe they generate is to understand their social imaginaries – the way ordinary people rather than a minority elite imagine their social surroundings. This is expressed often not in terms of the concepts of philosophers articulated within a theoretic culture– indeed they are more frequently even pre-conceptual – but carried in images, stories, legends, folktales, fables, morality plays. These enable a common understanding that make possible common practices and a widely shared sense of moral legitimacy. So we are still dealing, to some extent, with concepts, but conceived more broadly as part of a larger repertoire of imagination that at the margins are akin even to dreams and are generated less by a discrete, separate faculty of reason but equally by intuition, flashes of insights, even sudden awakenings, visions and so on (see Obeyesekere 2012). It involves our whole being, the deepest recesses of our mind, our body, our gut as much as our 'soul'. Moreover, it cuts through the fact-value, descriptive-evaluative dichotomy, incorporating a sense of how things usually go as well as how they ought to go. Take Taylor's own example – the practice of choosing governments. A part of the background understanding – as background it is inexhaustively deep and implicit – can never be made fully explicit and therefore can never be fully represented in our consciousness which is also why it is pre-conceptual. Making sense of the act of voting for each one of us, then, includes our awareness of the whole action, involving all citizens choosing each individually but from among the same alternatives and then compounding these micro-decisions into one binding, collective decision. Also essential to our understanding of it is what constitutes a foul. Pernicious influence, buying votes, threats, use of force, booth capturing – any unfair practice invalidates the election. In short, the act of choosing a candidate through voting involves certain norms and an image of an ideal case and beyond that to a moral/metaphysical order that is not easily available to those who thoughtfully perform these norm-governed acts. To understand such acts – which social science must do – is to understand the a social imaginary, and this is possible not through narrowly understood concepts and active ratiocination but through what, following Donald once again, can be called the 'mythic' (Donald 2012).

Now the mythic embodies a unique human cognitive system and an equally powerful way of representing reality to be found in a shared narrative tradition. Language and, therefore, words are equally crucial but are available here in oral speech, story-telling, public standardized versions of reality full of mythical archetypes and allegories (ibid.). Thought is organized and even defined but not by what Jerome Bruner calls the paradigmatic or logico-scientific mode but instead by a narrative structure generated by a much freer imagination that allows the invention of fictitious events as in story-telling and fantasies, allowing limitless variations in how the shared reality of a group might be constructed (Bruner 1986: 12). Mythic cultures give rise to ruling myths of society, including stories of origin, allegories of current behaviour, rationalisations of power found in all cultures, past and present but with exemplary clarity in Homeric and Vedic societies, in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as much as in the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* and the Puranic literature of India. They are not vestiges of the past in theoretic cultures but available in all sorts of ways in new fantasies, myths, utopic and dystopic narratives as, for instance, in secular-nationalist myths of the state as also in contemporary novels, poetry and films. Complex human intentionality in the present world cannot be comprehended without insights into the background of our thought and actions and a firmer hold on the mythic. If the understanding of social imaginary is equally central to the understanding of humans, then not just philosophy but also the literary and the mythic more generally is indispensable to the social sciences. Equally, if ideals of moral order are tied up with social imaginaries, then understanding of human predicaments and moral dilemmas the very stuff of literature and cinema that vividly imagine and make plausible the complex moral situations faced by human beings in culturally specific ways all over the world are or should become integral to the social sciences.

Hitherto I have argued that the conceptual world of humans (that it is the central task of the social sciences to understand) resides not only in the refined languages analysed by philosophers but also in the narrative structures of stories, fables, allegories, all the works of fictions imagined and invented by humans in their day-to-day living. But human intention and motivation, why humans do what they do is also expressed directly in human action, embodied in social practices, in their customary behaviour and rituals. This mimetic dimension of the human world, studied closely by the humanities is also indispensable to the social sciences. The rich detailed ethnography of Victor Turner, M. N. Srinivas, Pierre Bourdieu and Erving Goffman and the illuminating interpretations of art, particularly theatre, sculpture, dance,

pottery, architecture and cinema provide excellent examples. So is sport. Mimesis, Merlin Donald tells us, is an embodied, analogue, gestural mode that is inherently reduplicative and collective in nature (Donald 2012). It turns the public arena of action into theatre. Hence the primal form of distinctively human culture is theatrical, embodied and performance-oriented. Furthermore, mimetic knowledge is stored not in propositional, even narrative form but directly in human skills both individual and collective. It is also found in individual habits and collective rituals. The key to mimesis is thoughtful repetition or rehearsal. Individuals reenact a previous performance often with a great degree of imagination, in order to practice and improve upon it. Donald tells us that mimetic cognitive ability was probably the first to develop and became the basis both for the development of language and logico-scientific and theoretical orientations. But once again, like the mythic, the mimetic is not just a thing of the past, superseded and set aside. It still underpins every contemporary human culture, persisting in the numerous cultural variations in expression, body language, gesture, emotions and expressive customs as well as in the craft of tool use, pantomime, dance and athletic skills and prosodic vocalisation, i.e., rhythm, stress and intonation of speech, including in collective displays as, for instance, in republic day parades or other commemorative rituals and memorials. It survives in music and visual art and is the basis of role playing, fantasy and self-identification with various roles. A very crucial dimension of the human world will be neglected if this mimetic culture is not taken into account in the social sciences.

Religion

Can we have a proper study of humans, a science of humans that divorces itself from religion? Of course, much depends on what we mean by religion. In the west, where a sharp distinction between the immanent and the transcendent, the natural and the supernatural emerged at some point of time in its history, and where God was later seen as wholly transcendent, even having no further role to play in the world after creation, and where further, Religion was conceived as dealing only with the supernatural or transcendent God; in particular as pertaining exclusively to a set of beliefs about the nature of transcendent God, one might argue that it plays a small even if significant part in human affairs. If so, social science could be interested in Religion as a possible and limited object of study, helping us understand the specifically religious motivations. Beyond that, its study might be irrelevant. There is no reason to accept that it should

play an important role in understanding other dimensions of human life or in shaping our studies and theories about them. So, if this is what Religion is, then its neglect by social science appears justified.

In the preceding statements, the focus is on what the belief is about but if turn to the dominant current meaning of the term 'belief', one gets additional justification for why the attitude of social science to Religion should remain one of, at best, benign neglect. Before the seventeenth century, to believe was to enter into a relation with a person.[3] When it was said, 'I believe in X', it meant 'I trust her', have 'faith in her'. To believe in someone was to put one's confidence in her. Even Hobbes used the verb 'to believe' in roughly this sense. And this sense survives even today when, for example, one says, 'I believe in her word'. But by the time Locke begins to use the term, it ceases to have reference to this personalized dimension. And in the writings of Mill, it begins to refer fully to what we all understand the term *to mean*, namely 'assent to a proposition'. 'I believe' is always marked by intentionality. It has a propositional content. I believe that A is B (that the sun is out, that it is raining, that X is wicked and so on).[4]

Two other shifts in its meaning have occurred (Smith 1977: 52–68). First, instead of being used chiefly in the first person, as was the case earlier, *believe* began to be used in the third person. Not 'I believe', but 'He believes'. The difference between the two is phenomenal. 'I believe' refers to the world itself. For instance, I believe it is raining. But 'he believes' refers to the state of mind of the person. The reference of belief thus becomes something mental, inside the head of a person, rather than directly the thing itself out there. Second, the introduction of the mediating 'mental content' changed the relationship of 'believe' to Truth. It entailed the gradual severing of its link with Truth. Thus, when asked 'What is the population of Delhi?' one gets the answer, 'I believe it is 1.8 crores'. The unsaid in this statement, what is implicit in it, 'but I am not sure'. An element of uncertainty and doubt is introduced where none existed earlier.

These shifts are reflected in the way the term is used in relation to God, faith and religion. Prior to the seventeenth century, faith was not associated necessarily or significantly with belief, a coupling that occurred only after the overwhelming centrality of doctrine within Christianity. But even when faith and belief were spoken in one breath, to *believe* meant to hold dear, to love, to give allegiance or loyalty to God. To believe in God was to seek acceptance of one's loyalty to him. A belief in God was a loyal pledging of oneself to God. 'Given the reality of God as a fact of the universe, I hereby pledge to him my heart and soul' (ibid., 44). This was radically transformed in the seventeenth

century. Not only did Religion come to be associated strongly with belief but religious belief slowly came to mean, 'Given the uncertainty as to whether there be God or not, I answer that my opinion is Yes. I judge God to be existent and declare my faith in him' (ibid., 64–65).

Not only has the concept of Religion come to be associated with a theoretical entity of speculative interest but with something that could be true or false. If so, why must social science deal with something whose status is uncertain? And if we accept the argument that it is false, a set of false beliefs – false consciousness – then why must not one neglect it except as an object of explanation, i.e., to enquire why it is that people come to accept false beliefs. Under what conditions do they assent to false beliefs?

If Religion is a set of beliefs about a wholly transcendent God or, worse, a litany of false beliefs, then modern social science should hardly allow it to intrude into its affairs, but is it correct to reduce Religion, especially religious life in India to this specific modern conception of it that has emerged in parts of the west since the seventeenth century? This view of religion is not only shot through with highly selective sceptical and secularist assumptions but deeply intertwined with the history of western Christendom. Far from accepting it as true and valid, we should treat it with great caution and critical distance.

This point about the link between social science and western secularity and Christendom needs to be examined in more detail. For this purpose, I would like to draw the attention of the reader to the distinction drawn by Jan Assmann between primary and secondary religions (Assmann 2010). Primary religions evolve over thousands of years, are 'polytheistic' and are more like cults. They are culturally specific, inscribed in the institutional, cultural and linguistic conditions of society, coextensive with and identical to culture. They don't turn away from the world but rather are turned towards it. They try to make people at home in the world through rituals and sacrifices, rather than encourage them to have the comportment of exiles.

Secondary religions are different, very different. To begin with they owe their existence to an act of revelation or foundation. They are also known to try to emancipate themselves from their conditions of birth, to transcend all political, ethnic and cultural boundaries and eventually the world itself. Unlike primary religions the adherents of which simply know about their gods rather than display a clear sense of belonging to them and who don't see this knowledge in terms of true and false, secondary religions work with an emphatic concept of truth and denounce primary religions as false, idolatrous and superstitious. In these religions, truth is expounded as a normative edifice of

guidelines, dogmas, behavioural precepts and salvation doctrines. The truth proclaimed always comes with an enemy to be fought.

My point in drawing attention to this distinction is that social sciences are grounded not only in western Christianity but in secondary religions more generally. And though South Asian religions, partly guided by their own internal impulses and in part shaped by their interaction with Semitic secondary religions are no longer pure primary religions, they continue to have a strong imprint of and exhibit characteristics of primary religions. This means they are less belief-oriented, more embedded in social practices, are more strongly inscribed in the institutional and cultural practices of society. The distinction between religion and culture, between the religious and the social, is far more difficult to draw here than in the case of post–seventeenth century western Christianity. It follows that the study of society is to large extent a study of religious practices; and a study of traditions, to large extent, is a study of religious traditions. Neglecting religion, in places such as India, is to a significant extent ignoring the core matter of the object of one's study, namely human affairs. In short, in places such as India where characteristics of primary religions are still dominant, religious studies must constitute a major part of social and cultural studies. At least here, social sciences cannot afford to detach themselves from religious studies.

I hope to have shown the vacuity, even absurdity of the idea that social sciences are one thing and the humanities quite another, or that the former can be done without the latter. The claim about the indispensability of humanities to the social sciences is, more or less, trivially true.

Notes

1 This written paper is based on a public lecture delivered in the seminar series entitled "Synergies and Critique in the Humanities and the Social Sciences" at the Central European University, Budapest in October 2014.
2 www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtJmnDC0yMo
3 For an excellent discussion on the history of Belief and 'Believing' and on which my analysis draws upon heavily, see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Belief and History*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, 1977.
4 This of course is the standard view of belief found in Anglo-Saxon Analytical philosophy. For example, see John Searle. 1983. *Intentionality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and John Searle. 1979. *Expression and Meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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7 Are we in for post-humanist post-humanities?

Prasenjit Biswas

Without humanities and its multiple orientations to what is experienced as social, political and cultural reality, it is neither possible to reason and reflect nor it is possible to work with any cognitively designed human-machine interfaced ecosystem. Even technology is irrevocably humanized in an ecology that complements areas of human incapacities by an intersubjective sharing of skills, values and ideas. What seems to be in the distinctly technological domain appears as a set of skills and cognitive operations and flows into a qualitative human enterprise. This can happen because of entwining reach of human subjectivity and not just because of its use. One may argue that the form of human subsumes the machine as dispersed intelligence contained in the very form of machine. It would be a travesty to separate machine from the form of being human. Indeed, philosophers such as Heidegger and Raunig argued how the 'abstract' and the 'mechanical' is integral to the very matrix of human noesis, that is, the process of observer-observed entwining in human consciousness. Discussion in this would center around a Heideggearian move of incorporation of the nonhuman and the machinic within the horizon of 'being human' by redefining technological 'flesh' of the world. The question is, do humanities in an era of what Raunig called as 'cognitive capitalism' expands its frontal and lateral pathways of understanding? What is more symptomatically known as 'digital era' lays exponentially enhanced spaces of relationship between the human subject, codes, digits, numbers, machine intelligence and consciousness in a completely new twist to human creativity and self-reflexivity. The digital era assumes greater reach and depth in what I term as *Technohumanities*, which raises the stock value of humanities. The paper discusses the turn to technohumanities in its virtual and simulacral presentation of the entire human potential, which shows how an ignited, perturbed, implosive and transformed humanities regenerate the plasticity of the phenomenon

of being human into an area of cognitive and posthumanistic techno-eco-human geoacademia. The implosion of the human and humanities combines signs, genetic codes, graphic to temporal resonances that makes it flexible, modifiable and yet traversing into many crossroads and frontiers of transformation.

The unhomely humanities

Transformation of humanities can be observed as a phenomenon from a specific vantage point in the history of ideas, as thinkers like Heidegger had indicated. Heidegger is specifically concerned about the transformation of the very idea of being human into an idea of drawing up a limit and a boundary with the organic and the biological. Being human assumes a redefinition by being different from the category of 'being' to a category 'relations', elicitations, receptions, navigations and the like in its developing poly- and meta-valences. Following Catherine Malabou, one is tempted to call this growing nature of being as 'plasticity of being' that enjoys naturalistic knowledge of this orientation to plasticity.[1] Heidegger characterized this new mode of existence as 'the hand holds (on to) speaking'.[2] Of course, speaking, for Heidegger is not mere 'determination of presence' as having, presenting, knowing and orienting, but simple holding 'on the way' to a passage that leads to functions of giving-receiving-sending off, an interminable promise of signs. The promise manifests in cognitive activity of being aware of voiceless objects (as in natural sciences) as well as another subject (like in humanities), which is a dialogic activity through acts of significations. Signification of dialogic cognitive acts present themselves as erasures, as traces of erasure of being that is reproduced and represented in language. This erasure marks an erasure of boundary between being human and being an Other (nature or another subject) in an opening towards the world, which would then be a place of giving–receiving–sending off. This particular description of Heidegger's idea of human is the idea of a return to a place that is its own other, an other topos, site or home, which is on the way to holding another hand in a chain of hands. The situation of holding, instead of having or possessing, as per Heidegger, rediscovers what is humane and, hence, it ought to be the core of the life of mind. In the digital era, humanities can hold onto its core values by connecting hands, concerns and ideas to the Other and for the Other without fixing the place of the Other.

This directedness to the Other is not from a position of being an Other, as, an otherized Other can never speak or give to the Other.

Humanities, from its unfixed place of speaking and giving to the Other assume a form of 'self-respect' that gives it the place of 'speaking-to', an agency role that cannot be displaced onto a mere act of taking and receiving. Instead the way the knowledge of the Other is presented in humanities speaks of the relation that it has with its own disciplinary sources, which is a continuous and ongoing search, a mode of speaking-to without setting an end. In this way, humanities stands in difference to other disciplines with a goal, purpose or end. In Kantian terms, it assumes a certain sublimity over any limiting presuppositions of knowing and theorizing, as it is a 'purpose without a purpose'. The purpose is an explicit handing down or handing over a being-in-the-world which does not go by fixing a reference or place, rather open itself up to an infinity of interpretative labor by speaking-to the Other continually and endlessly. This is an ontological commitment to the Other that humanities foregrounds in the malaise of earlier forms of totalization, universalism and utopian controls on a project of emancipation. Such a commitment of humanities not only widens its continual search for plural perspectives, each of which are contestable from other perspectives, but also creates borderline engagements of cultural difference, collaboration, dialogue and even sustains incommensurability. This is how humanities become humane in a reflexive and performative sense.

In the process, it opens up a new space of interpretation, dialogue and rediscovery that would work toward a new being-in-the-world, a finding that is 'a remainder without a remainder', a remaindering. Jean Luc Nancy posits as being singularly plural or plurally singular that undoes every single attribute and assumes a discrete plurality that shares a being-with every Other. Although we pose the question of being human from within a given frame of metaphysics and history of philosophy, yet the question takes us to what has not been thought about it, a *remainder that arises after thinking of what is*. Therefore, such a method and manner of thinking for the unthought is also a mode of speaking to the Other, the unthought vestiges of being or reality or truth, which is to be *shared* with Other. This sharing of the unthought of aspects of culture and knowledge with others puts thought and ideas in circulation by way of sharing in the place between being spoken of and speaking, in between given and giving, between receiving and being received, between debt and returning, between mourning and memorializing. This is what Kant characterized as sublime, Heidegger as presencing, Derrida as erasure and Jean Luc Nancy as existence to pick up an operational meaning in humanities. Such meanings remaindering after the trace of the

human is erased in the presencing of the hand that inhabit the act of speaking-to, which is a necessary correlate of ontological questions regarding truth, value or Being.

Humanities as remaindering is an exercise of mopping up the left over, the exilic and the out of joint – *a mode of presencing that certainly brings back a certain tradition of philosophizing about the past and the history in order to understand what exists today*, as a coming over. In speaking-to the Other, in sharing with the Other the remainders of being, there is a symbolic giving of what one has, which is also an abandoning of a given sense of being Human and create an alternate space for an empathic, reflexive and representational awareness of the Other as a Subject. In this way the un-related Other arises as an irreducible singular that enters into an ontological relationship with oneself. Ethical transcendence is embedded in this relationship with the Other, as the unreflective gap between the descriptivity and the normativity of this relationship *breaches* and *reorders* the social totality. Humanities makes such an interruption of social totality possible by creating an impossibility of bridging the gap between the social and the matrix of relations that constitutes what is social.

Such a notion of a breached sense of 'social' in the politico-ethico programs of humanities deal with the irreducible remainder that haunts the construction and the claim of the very sense of being human. This sense is a sense of speaking-to, after giving one's place in a symbolic presencing of oneself, as a trace in history. What remains in such multiple sources and sites of belonging in a received world of giving, recovering, twisting *is* a projection of the Other in being-with-the-Other. In the contemporary spread of offensive instance of cultural appropriation of the Other in which the Other is projected as a victim, who could be mocked at and whose cultural and religious beliefs could be twisted in the name of entertainment poses a big problem to the project of being-with-the-other. Humanities can speak to the Other in such moments of Otherization that puts the Other under siege. The question is, how is language used to communicate / mediate this siege of difference and sharing with the Other?

Heidegger's understanding of this opening to the besieged Other is 'conversational', which opens itself up to the promise of a future of fore-giving, fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception.[3] The problem is posed by noted litterateur J. M. Coetzee in this fashion in his fiction *Elizabeth Costello*:

> There is first of all the problem of the opening, namely, how to get us from where we are, which is, as yet, nowhere, to the far bank.

> It is a simple bridging problem, a problem of knocking together a bridge. People solve such problems every day. They solve them, and having solved them push on.[4]

This experiential dimension of bridging between oneself and the Other, both in distance and proximity, banks on available resource of finding a common space of dialogue and reciprocity that requires a play of moral imagination, may be in terms of intense forgetting and forgiving. Heidegger conceived of this play as a going beyond the given relationship with the Other as yielding to a place of difference as an open place, in which a new language would emerge. The presence and difference with the Other brings fore-conception of the going and coming-toward the present, a temporal movement that goes beyond the objectivity of being the Other. Humanities can display such a fore-conception of a cultural other without an affirmation of a social and political boundary, which can locate a discourse of otherness in a disclosure of its cultural and literary imaginary.

This fore-conception is radically different from a pre-conception with which one presents an idea of being. Humanities' fore-conception of the world of social relations in terms of Otherness creates singularity of the unexchangeable and works for creating a work that is never complete. There is a necessary movement of thought from 'becoming homely within' to 'the depth of its uncanniness' in this experience of the Other.[5] It is a movement from the experience of being not-at-home with the 'nothing' of the world to a law of being unhomely that makes the human being wander around the experience of the Other. Taking a cue from Freud's notion of uncanniness as 'frightening objects' – uncanniness as inevitably present in life and fiction, or better, life as fiction – Derrida attributed the uncanny, 'to the play of the double, to the endless exchange between the fantastic and the real, the symbolized and the symbolize, to the process of interminable substitution'.[6]

Humanities' commitment to this law of unhomeliness finds its best expression in not knowing one's way about in the labyrinths of language that makes interminable substitution of signs possible. When one does not know the way about and wanders around for a fore-conception of disciplinary knowledge, one is evidently dislocated and displaced within, counter to what humans are fundamentally seeking. A 'counteressence' with only a foreground that is now unconcealed on the path or on the way to unhomeliness is what humanities desires to keep.[7] This work of unhomeliness in humanities gives way to a movement out of the disciplinary precincts toward what Heidegger declared as conceptualization of 'Being' in terms of 'proximality' or

'present at hand', which is not within the long-term and entrenched belief system.[8] Heidegger conceived it further as an expulsion out of the *polis* in order to wander, which is a subsumption to the law of the particular – to politics, religion, economy or law.[9] The unease, uncanny and unhomely movement outside of humanities is a move toward an 'abstract particular', to a politics of sensing, knowing and encountering the Other. Humanities can only figure out this relationship of unhomeliness in the context of changing this relationship with the Other. Such a change of relationship with the Other cannot come *alone* from a wandering labor of the law of unhomeliness – which is learning from the experience in being unhomely and wandering in the implicitness of differing and deferring. It will require a certain structure of undecidability that often misrepresents as well. This is experiencing difference with the disclosure of a difference without any prior knowledge or preconception that breaks the subject into a multiple, into a cluster called humanities. This breaking into multiple is encyclopedic and it awaits no explanation of how an experience of being unhomely and wandering traverses into a cluster representational concept of humanities. The unhomely humanities is without a demonstrated concept of being human when one is wandering around, which now needs to be broken by a chain of practices of reinscribing the experience that we undergo.

Is this practice of reinscribing an act of encounter between 'words' and 'counterwords'? Is it an appropriation of being human within the sites of a history of encounter? Or is it at the limit of the path from which one is expelled by being a Subject of the law of unhomeliness? Don't all these and many other emerging queries end in not finding a noncircular justification for belonging to the uncanny? Is it what Heidegger describes as 'knowing that belongs to those who are expelled'?[10] Isn't it 'poetizing knowing' – an animalization, an othering that lies in the depth of uncanniness itself? Isn't this a risking and wrecking of knowledge by bringing encyclopedic and monumental corpus into an open site of how it looks like? It has something to do with not how humanities have so far described the human but how humanization involves the possible places of retention or loss of meaning within a discursive enunciation of what is 'being human'. This may extend to finding a more liberated and more cultured space for an alternating notion of being human that negotiates the overwhelming difference with itself on a particular site or location of learning, but remains open to what is left over from such an act of reinscription. The constituting power of being unhomely presides over the constituted notions of disciplines in order to push it *to* a nonreductive and *no*-non-circular,

anti-anti-ethnocentric inclusion by exclusion, a movement into a non-assuring fore-conception. This is a demonstrative mode of Othering without the full presence of the Other, not making itself legible and yet working on the lapidary structure of playfulness.

The full presence of the Other in contemporary presumptive forms of appropriation of humanities does not leave a place of debt to history, rather it creates only a presumptive dissociation from anti-humanist preoccupations with conservative forms of ideas. It is ironical to note that presumptive dissociation from anti-humanist regimens of knowledge and ideologies takes the form of overdeterimnation of 'history without a Subject'.[11] In sharp contrast, Hilary Putnam's 'Reason with a Human Face'[12] recognizes the alien, the savage and the irrational as the Other of Reason who cannot be scientized, but opens up a new way of *relativizing* Reason in terms of following the rule of/from other's cultures. This is necessarily a dialogic attempt, an attempt not to otherize the Other, but an attempt to 'unveil the Other's being-within-the-world' and celebrating it in our humanities. This is where relativization of our reason to encounter or face the Other makes us simultaneously unhomely' in the sense of responsibility towards the other without essentializing them in some noncircular justification as well as it makes us *move* in the 'underived intentionality' of the Other without breaking the boundary between the self and the Other. This endows the Other with the possibility of an exit as well of voice so that an un-directed wandering produce an incalculable sense of justice. Humanities require this art of boundary crossing and not boundary breaking or breaching, but 'to surpass it only in the direction of Other's ends'.[13] This sensitivity to value the Other in Other's terms, which is a 'healing process' of enriching and surpassing the perpetually eluding Other. The Other appears not as negative and self-refuting, but as a Gothic eponym that humanizes those documents of civilization that are at the same time documents of barbarism. Humanities have to articulate this experience of historicizing the human in the undecidable boundary crossing between the self and the other without breaching it and rupturing it, so that one can enrich oneself by surpassing it only in the direction of Other's ends, in the Gothic parallel of the Other. It articulates this experience of encounter with the Other in detraumatizing the stereotypes of the Other by facing up to an engagement with what is ontologically anti-human in our self-conscious conditioning of the self-sameness. Putting oneself at stake in this way is a process of healing oneself from the injurious acts of othering the other as well as from the unhappy angst of being ignored and injured by the Other. This is a many-valued unfoldment of enlightenment as well as

of an emancipatory logic by way of removing the anthropologically bound 'binary opposition' of self and other. It facilitates coming out of disadvantage of dis-possession that Caliban had once experienced, or the virile power that Taliban enjoys by incorporating the negation of the West as the Other. Humanities find its new grounds in *removing* such instances of dispossession and negation of the Other in surpassing the anti-human from the direction of Other's ends.

These new grounds are Gothic renewal of a therapeutic humanism[14] that exorcizes the ills that we see in Others and not in ourselves. The sense of Gothic lies in 'folding of the underworld of the conquering society into the culture of the conquered', which in-itself 'is not as an organic synthesis or "syncretism" . . . but as a chamber of mirrors reflecting each stream's perception of the other'.[15] Humanities, quite paradoxically, reinforces a sense of Hobbesain war on Others in order to exorcize itself of the avoidable illness that necessarily comes from the Other. Its methodological surpassing and enriching of the Other from Other's multifarious ends splits the singularity of its being of 'being human' into a multiple. Multiple, plural humanities in turn assume a capability of self-subversion, a phantasmic recuperation of its dispersed and plural oppositions into the binds of a self-critique, which imprints a 'hurt' on our conceptions of who we are. The hurt ego of humanities looks for a Pascalian place from where it would reinterpret its ontological commitments as well as push for a change of heart that achieves bidirectional flesh of serving the mankind as well as fortify it from universal and homogenous history of Man. Lending support to such a process of healing with the erasure of fixed sense of being into being-toward or being-with does the *groundwork* for a post-humanist humanities. This groundwork is posited as

> [T]ransformation of the imagized, is not a copy, that is, in the sense of being what we might generally mean . . . when we say a 'faithful copy'. Yet for it to be (magically) effective on the real world of things, persons, and events. it would very much seem that it has to be just that – a 'faithful' copy such that the (. . .) law by which 'the magician' infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by *imitating* it.[16]

Taussig considered mimetic reproduction of norms of violence and colonization by the colonized as an imitation that can bring magical healing of the effect of the violence and subjugation. Such an imitation forms the ground for mimesis of mimesis which is enacted by the marginalized groups such as children/women, etc., who are called

to approve of the effect of the mimetic on the community create an epiphany of the social being of the magic that involves the community in totality as its charmed Subject. This grounding of the dominant form of knowledge now produces a reverse impact of knowing how the colonized hold the colonizer as an ontologically reversed, appropriated image of Other. In the process of acceptance of this reversion by the dominant colonizer, Taussig argued that the symbolic world of the colonized is given a place within the dominant White cultural panorama as an alterity, which is a 'First World quest for a decent fix of straightforward Othering'.[17]

This situation of a necessary concept of Othering as the ground of one's own cultural legacy and legitimacy is described by Richard Rorty in such Nietzschean terms as 'how to finitize while exhibiting a knowledge of one's own finitude (. . .) how to overcome authority without claiming authority'.[18] A kind of humbled sense of being that entirely arises as a response to the Other. This ground and task of re-(de)scripting one's own human condition attempts at overcoming internally the dominant claims of Being or the central motif of older metaphysics of presence, such that the redescription itself does not fall back in the square one. This task of redescription, therefore, must invent new vocabularies of manifesting the repressed underside of both the Self and the Other, which is best done through irony and the seeking of private perfection. Further such ironist mode of self-creation is also meant for giving a vent to the historical experience of suffering of others.

Humanities can re-describe philosophers in close connection with novelists who operate in such an ironic mode. For example, Rorty suggested that Heidegger could be read with Kundera and Dickens[19] and Derrida could be read with Paul de Man in their implicit connection. Similarly Nabokov and Orwell are read by Rorty in terms of Philosophical disparities between surreal eroticism of Lolita and O'Brien's profanity of the real, both of which would illuminate a liberal utopia of coping, caring and curing. Such critical juxtaposition as well as the attempt of 'private perfection' in a close encounter between the world and the text endows the reader with a new mode of speaking-to the Other. Heightened 'sensitivity' to the suffering of others in this mode of understanding constitute redescriptions of how the life is lived that augment humanities as a whole with the prosthetic play of language. In an ironic way private perfection is attained through a passive understanding and sensitivity of the pain of others in one's very self-description and yet one cannot universalize and validate this language of self-construction across contexts. The language of self-construction,

then, has to remain open to the possibility of meeting the Other in a dialogue of coincidence and noncoincidence. The moment such a language meets the Other, it makes possible an understanding of the other as an act of forage, as it is much more than a hermeneutic horizon of fusion, as it becomes a language of the other. Richard Rorty celebrates this language without a metaphysics of Othering, that is, without a disciplinary bound of 'private perfection' versus the public other. Humanities can develop such a praxis of private perfection with a sense of being in the shoe of the Other, that is, by making the language of the Other as one's own and by realizing that the language with which one speaks-to the Other *also* comes from the Other.

This aspect of inclusivity and otherness of the language of self-perfection remains ubiquitous by drawing a metaphorical solace from other's pain and yet, such a language can only be partly expressed in an ironic recognition of the suffering of others as an inseparable component of one's own articulation of private perfection and freedom. This moment of private perfection does not stand in conflict with how one is embodied in public. This is made evident by Rorty's unique juxtaposition of Heidegger, Dickens and Kundera as a novel humanistic experiment. Such an unconventional and non-canonical critical reading by Rorty encourages the humanities in shelving the metaphysical duality between fact and its enactment.

For Rorty, both Heidegger and Kundera are engaged in overcoming a common enemy, the western metaphysics in their ways to language that places the self in the Other. While for Heidegger such overcoming consists in openness to being-with, unhomeliness of the Self in the world; for Kundera, it consists in giving every individual an equal right to have a claim over truth without anyone's truth being final. Obviously Rorty sees greater prospect in what Kundera opens up, because that will go into stabilizing a Dickensian 'crowd of eccentrics' rejoicing in each other's idiosyncrasies, curious for novelty rather than being nostalgic for primordiality. One can read here a Rortyean redescription of both Heidegger and Kundera in Dickensian terms, an apparent meeting of two different purposes interrupting each other to produce what Rorty calls 'the democratic utopia' made synonymous with 'the novel' in Rorty's re-description. Further Rorty ironizes the Heideggerian project of overcoming of Metaphysics by putting it in mutual and each other's cross recognition of each other's attempts of affirmation and expression of themselves. Such an actually existing mutual recognition of being in the self is an overcoming of metaphysics for Heidegger,[20] while for Kundera, it is a sequence of discoveries and for Dickens it is a refusal to fall under any moral typology.[21] This is

certainly a cross-fertilization of a experiential and existential mode of knowing from the Other without being limited by perception of love or hate. Humanities in its space of private perfection can certainly, then, open up a project of overcoming metaphysical caesura between language and world and strive towards dissemination of plurality of expressions independent of the medium they use. It would be like opening up the hatch of the Trojan Horse that would reveal an attack as well as a strategy of survival in a closely collaborated and yet contested world of articulations.

(S)age of posthumanities

Nietzsche did this groundwork of opening the hatch in terms of examining what he called as will-to-power: 'Will to power is in essence and according to its inner possibility the eternal return of the same' (HN I.467). But this possibility of being as a positive affirmation of will needs an elimination of negation and opposition between *will* and *what the will wills*, which according to Heidegger is *ineliminable* despite the fact that such a relationship of opposition and negation is *not* expressed in the will itself. Rather Heidegger sees in Nietzsche the possibility of 'eternal return to the same' as a mark of philosophical understanding of the world as the return to an eternal opposition between contradictory forces and the will that tries to overcome such contradictions, despite the embeddedness of the will in the ineluctable contradiction between will and force.[22] Nietzsche realized the futility of 'overcoming metaphysics' primarily because the aesthetic valorization of appearance rejects the ideal notion of truth and brings back the world of contradictions in contrast to will-to-knowledge. How does one reconcile between will-to-power and will-to-knowledge? Heidegger in the Nietzschean vein, conceived of a metaphysical opposition between self and other as destruction of the ground of this very opposition, which is the very pathos of thought. This pathos of thought in itself an is illness that takes into account a perspectival ontology of truth that does not admit a determinate and fixed set of guiding principles, but moves outside the inherent characteristics of the given perspective. By setting a different perspective and moving against the grain of that, Nietzsche carries out a philosophical questioning of the dominant motifs and meanings that are contested by it. A humanities based on such Nietzschean perspectivism in which one could speak of seeing things differently by cultivating a spirit of 'how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations' so that our notion of will-to-knowledge includes 'resolute reversals of accustomed perspectives'.

Nietzsche characterized this spirit of knowing as *an intelligible constitution of things* by knowing enough of things by our intellect, which of course involves what he eloquently called *turning* 'reason against reason'.[23] This turning 'reason against reason' strategy has reached its culminating moments of reversal in Nietzsche's critique of idealism about truth, when he pronounced that speaking of truth as Plato did only meant 'standing truth on her head and denying perspective, the basic condition of all life, when one spoke of spirit and the good'.[24] Further it characterizes contrapuntal play of reason against reason in the imperious play of the world (that) mixes being and semblance in turning human life into a *dispositif* of questioning of the value of the 'values for life'.[25] This celebrates a perspectival relativization of life without attaching value on one's own perspective, but by opening will-to-knowledge to overcoming one's own experiences in a manner of reconstructing subjectivity,

> "what really was that which we have just experienced?" and moreover: "who are we really?" and, afterward as aforesaid, count the twelve trembling bell-strokes of our experience, our life, our *being* – and alas! miscount them. – So we are necessarily strangers to ourselves, we do not comprehend ourselves, for us the law "Each is furthest from himself" applies to all eternity – we are not "men of knowledge" with respect to ourselves.[26]

This therapeutic going against one's own self arises from overcoming the limits of self-knowledge, which implicitly means an absence of self-certitude as well as surpassing from the point of view of the Other and ultimately making all the perspectives subsist towards transvaluation of differences and distances. This is partly desubjectivation and desensitization of knowledge itself to demonstrate the insignificance of constitution of subject as will-to-knowledge and 'the sense of being can only issue into the undermining of all sense to being'. After this part desubjectivation, will-to-power can end up in a nihilistic self-dissolution as its final outcome. This is situating human life in the place of the negative, while one discovers that being as the relation of all relations is undermined by the will-to-knowledge that ascertains that such a relation is unfounded. Being as relation of all relations is opened up to a modality of desubjectivated and transvaluated will-to-power that that leaves the ontological-linguistic constitution of being wide open, which I earlier characterized as remaindering, the left over! *Can humanities in a critical manner overturn this embedded nihilism, this remaindering of itself into wavering of the creative and the will-to-power aspects*

of unhomeliness of being human?[27] Heidegger posits this ontological-ontic difference in constitution of the presumptive self-other relation in any perspective taken upon the world. For example, Heidegger thought of Van Gogh's 'Peasant's shoes' as images of speaking and talking, as he argued that once these shoes are painted, they speak for themselves and gets detached from its subject, which is a de-realization of its thinghood,[28] non or un-realization of its realization. This de-realizability of thinghood in painting is a destruction of desire, which is desire turned into un- or non-desire, an unfounding of the relationship with an art object. Van Gogh's shoes are objects of non-desire in a moment of detachment from its subjectivity. In other words derealization is correlated with desubjectification, which is a disappearance of the 'desire to be desired'. Indeed reproduction of the materiality of the world in an apparatus of reflection retains its value until it is turned into a mere designation of something, a dis-value, which Nietzsche intended to re-value from a perspective of the Other, a truth of the Other that lies beyond the will-to-power and will-to-knowledge that cannot trans-value the embedded value of the object. The ontological structure of imagination is inverted in the materiality of the thing in the image with the consequence that the image breaks up, which is a breakdown of the nexus between the image and the object, a nexus of desire. The image of the human breaks up into a thing with its loss of being human as it wanders across the will-to-power of the lost subject of humanities. In this post-annulment of the desire for art that de-realizes the thing 'of' or 'called as' the art, the possibility of pure snobbery would be realized, as in the mainstream American academia. This is a realization of being human in the condition of posthuman just as 'Stalin realized society of love by abolishing love'.[29]

The posthuman condition is not bereft of love but, it is only bereft of the desire for love. The will-to-power creates its truth of love out of unrealizability or impossibility of love in the condition when humans lose anthropogenic desire and becomes an animal. Boris Groys in his sardonic notion of a 'posthistorical philosopher' stated,

> Under the posthistorical condition, philosophy becomes impossible (. . .). Snobbery is a struggle for recognition beyond desire, as a pure play of signifiers. Under the posthistorical condition philosopher becomes a snob. To understand that means to reject the philosophical attitude, to reject philosophy – and to become a Sage.[30]

Does then becoming sage involves being nonphilosophical? In the Indian academia of humanities, such posthumanist sages knock out

the means of realization of being human by way of promising new Nalandas, Taksheelas or Chairs in the name of Vivekanada, Ambedkar and others, the harbingers of reason and modernity. This act of naming valorizes the world into a replay of lives, often pitting one hero against the other that gives a false sense of enchantment and *bhakti* for sages. This embarks into a nonphilosophical way of reviving philosophy without its realization in what one does and hence creates a sagely detachment to philosophy. Just as the hand only holds onto being, in the same way, the discipline holds onto a philosophy of its existence by emptying out it in the poverty of thoughts and ideas. An excessive attempt at self-critique too produces an adjunct of reasoning in showing off a certain snobbery of elite reason that cultivates a situated partiality in the conflict between knowledge and power. Do humanities find its promised 'kingdom of ends' in this flattening of the world of learning into a metaphysics of disvaluing art, aesthetics, literature, philosophy, etc., into a perishing and pulverized representation? As a result representation of humanities as an Other is operationalized within the academic world in its difference and alterity that goes onto drawing a bottom-line or a benchmark for policy reform. Humanities stand out as the weakest specie in this worldly representation, as if it is derealized with its manner of addressing and including the Other. What it expropriates is an estranged sense of cultural belonging in the predatory ecology of impact factor bound research on self-inflicted injuries in terms of which humanities remain abandoned in the conformist struggle for recognition.

Transhuman *Neti*

The only way left for the study of humanities is to signify an ecological turn in the Posthuman times. A turn towards a system of interfaced and interconnected beings and entities that places technology, human values, moral and aesthetic aspirations of being human side by side in a discourse of a politically obligatory form of humanities can face up or dwindle before this 'cunning of reason'. Such a binary of incremental/decremental cunning of reason, placed within humanity fuses together a variety of unfulfilled needs. The intellectual and cultural limitations of not being able to respond to natural and animal worlds, disasters and its victims, wars and its refugees, stateless migrants, vagabonds, etc., and such other annulled state of being human marks the thrownness of humanities in the world. This annulment of being human in posthuman conditions of suffering sensitizes and commits one to human well-spring. Categorization of such concerns by way

of precise identification of the problem and issue at hand assumes a newer commitment to building new solidarities based on humanitarian and humane sensibilities, which in turn calls for new vistas of reason and understanding. This would then require an internal mobilization of theories, revision of concepts and revalidation of arguments that are presently available as well as extending them to situations of pain and suffering. This is not just an internal self-critique of a 'disciplined' humanities, but it is an extensive overhauling and remediation of some of its limitations in order to open up its closures to new realizations and realities.

Keeping this task at hand as an ever-open challenge to disciplinary bounds of humanities, one would provide a better perspective to the problem by raising a similar question on the capability of redemption in natural sciences, engineering and technology, which are apparently getting closer to solutions to problems that afflict humanity as such. The question is, do the gifted sciences in general deliver ready solutions to multifaceted problems of humanity that afflict both the sphere of knowledge as well as human worlds? For example, the case of Ebola virus or genetic curing of cancer are taken up from time to time as problems that could be addressed by better research findings in sciences. This is how one connects science and engineering to human problems. Ethical issues of bioengineering, GM food, stem cell research brings a new human face to the artificial reality of material and intelligent sciences. In a Rortyean sense, one would see a new language game not just as making a new move, but in bringing forth a new criterion of evaluation of new scientific perturbations and modulations. It is as if discovering new phantasms in our old ways of thinking and expressing familiarizes us with maps and contours of imagination directly, which is embodied in newer worries about such new objects such as internets and genetically modified brinjals. The same old brinjal assumes an experimentally changed genetic material without any change in qualities of taste, shape and color that alters our brain circuits of knowing and picturing the world with new existential worries. Such worries find its ostensive expressions not just in racist violence and exclusion of non-science in the curriculum, but in slow disappearance of forests, snow caps, lakes, repeated dry season and occurrences of tsunamis and storms. How does one develop a cosmology of the tragic opposition between existential worries related to scientific transformations and climate change, which are unable to exist painlessly even when a person is trying to walk straight on the road? Which ergonomy can sustain an existentially worried person in the midst of meltdown of polar ice as well as finances? Is it a Kuhnian

paradigm shift in our understanding of being human in the posthuman times? Is it a manifestation of the extraordinary in the everyday experience of getting new thrills of technoscience? Is it also a hermeneutic reconstruction of a existentially lived science that *does not allow* the magical outputs of science function without undisclosed clinical trials on specimens of humanity or in the fields of plant?

Relatedly, a paradigm of nano-materials such as stem cell chips that might help resolve issues of energy crisis as well as end the depletion of non-replenishable natural resources open up the possibility of a newer horizon of human survival in a gradually shrinking lived space of the earth. Does survival then create new inventory of voice and paraphernalia of meeting our own doubles in what looks absurd in our cognition and sensibilia? These questions posed before we start 'hoping Hopes' open up a storyteller's reach into the deeper recesses of danger, flight and survival. Seemingly fundamental issues of human existence get resolved in a plethora of scientific achievements without much of a role from humanities, but by feeling, willing and emoting human subjects tied to a variety of angsts. Do human concerns with science's indifference to the human subject then ends up in a drama of intelligent machines? *Does it also mean that scientific work in its ultimate form hand us down with deliverance that humanities as disciplines only promises us to deliver?* Is it a new theology and sacrament of science and technology in the mere simulacral scars of human subjectivity? Or is it the case that greater the gift of science and technology greater is the human propensity to auto-affected eroticism of self-preservation? Is it the case that human reality does not get fundamentally corrected *without* some kind of religious, political, ethical and such other interventions that can make science into an ecclesiastical core of humanity. This humanitarian intervention in the posthuman science can redescribe the being of the human in its connection with the other, who is in play with this science of ecclesiastics.

The debate is not therefore between the efficacy and usefulness of science versus humanities, as the current posthumanist academia seems to be divided with. It is rather the separateness of science and humanities in addressing specific issues that can't in any manner be shifted from one side to the other. Just as sciences cannot resolve issues like racism, xenophobia and superiority complexes played through politics, arts and media; in the same way humanities cannot resolve critical issue of supplying continuous energy in a geosynchronic satellite, or the issue of Ebola virus. These ends of human world come together, yet in the sphere of knowledge, they assume an unbreachable

specificity that needs to be bridged up without altering domain specific understanding and protocols of knowing.

No ultimate judgment can be passed at this division and impasse. Yet one can only notice an imposition of limits on science by humanities and vice-versa by making them respond to each other without any parochial anti-stance. Indeed, domain specificity led to a variety of responses. At one level, there is a kind of complicated reductionism that disciplines such as economics, behaviorial sciences and management sciences attempt to do. Seemingly there is deployment of a logic of equilibrium under certainty and uncertainty to understand human behavior given that one is endowed with a number of alternative choices. It is the logic of choice that goes into determining which mix of knowledge shall give the highest payoff or outcome, which will go into preference of one over the other. Such a logic of choice creates a focal point in disciplinary exercises and their outcomes but it would limit the reach and depth of disciplines to construction of focal point in knowledge that would serve certain interests instead of humanity in general. The participatory possibilities of choice get limited in this way of choosing the focal point in a variety of disciplines that would ensure expected outcomes of learning. Overall this kind of calculated mode of learning in a system of curriculum would go against the very impetus and inspiration for a 'shared practical ability' to address human issues and problems, as it would promote a strict utilitarian version of what one needs to learn and know. Posthumanities would encompass utilitarian point of view with that aspect of science that cannot be objectivated. The question is, how do humans relate to that aspect of creativity of science which cannot be reduced to utility? Does this remainder, or left-over, of our creative impulse (which is never integrable in our symbolic universe) only act as an objective correlative of knowledge in science and humanities? Is it the postdisciplinary objective correlative of posthuman sciences?

Such an objective correlative is theorized in autopoetic recursivity of the self-knowledge in observing-observed, touching-touched coupling and superposition between consciousness and states of the world. This is a phenomenological rendering of the posthuman transition to states of world as states of being without a breach or joint in which the human being as an observer can draw a distinction between such states. Once again, here is an investment in self-reference of the others by way of introspection, negation and sublimation, which is constructing a subsystem of internal self-referentiality for the system of observation. Such a subsystem makes the apparatus of knowing affected by the inner states of the Other from within itself, which is

possible because of a primordial and indissociable unity between the self and the world.

This autopoetic management of practical needs of knowledge also creates a dispute of commitments. Commitment to act and behave in a disciplinary way and the commitment to participate in an open ended ecology of knowledge where every participant contributes in many a creative way is un-mappable by a logic of choice and equilibrium. The question is, can commitment to knowledge creation and understanding have this immense strength of recreation of a greater human sensibility towards human needs by overcoming what management limits in its focal point? One can answer this question by clearly identifying two different possibilities within history of ideas: one that gives a deflationary alternative to behavioristic choice based disciplinary focal points and the other that critiques the foundational certitude of any logic of choice. The first possibility is articulated in ever flourishing sense of being human that marks a detranscendentalization[31] of human subjects in empirical worlds, which results into a pluralism of disciplines and their mutually reinforcible 'normativity' in what ought to be done and ought not to be done from a *participant's* point of view. This pluralism with a normative slant is explained by Žižek in an inimitable way,

> Subjectivation designs the movement of thought which the subject integrates what is given him/her into the universe of meaning- [but] *this integration always ultimately fails*, there is a certain left-over which cannot be integrated into the symbolic universe, an objects which resists subjectivation, and the subject is precisely the correlative to this object.[32]

This sovereign place of the Subject outside the discourse remains as the perpetual subject matter of interest that resists appropriation. Such a Subject lies at the interstices of diverse frameworks of science, philosophy and literature, and remains a matter of effect of discourse, called as subject-effect by Foucault. What Žižek showed is that such an effect retains an irreducible remainder, which remains a subject of philosophical-linguistic-ethnographic and other such modalities of homing-in the unhomely subject. The unhomely wandering trace of the Subject as an effect of metonymic relation that the 'self', 'world', 'culture' set up between themselves helps recover the very sense of being-in-the-world as being-with in the institution of a certain genre of writing. This mode of writing as recovery brings in a delayed sense of justice by being – with all the others with whom one can enunciate

a co-subjectivity. This is a dialogic and constitutive sense of preparing ground for a normative sense of justice in the world, which arises as a surplus over the constitution of self. This precisely opens up possibility of re-understanding life in a variety of forms that can be cast upon, but not in a non-circular way. This encumbrances humanities from the end of constitution of an experiential subjectivity just as it shows up the thrown art of imagination and reason in the cunning of that subjectivity. The cunning lies in the manner of transformation that does not any longer have an existential underground of humanism, but an inner molting of the sculpture of being human into being other that would elude a continuous genealogy, or a therapy for change.

The second possibility arises from a Kafkesquean, Joycean and Borgesean worldview of resisting correspondence between human agency and the event of interpretation of an experience, and thereby, opening up a world of dancing, floating and discrete 'signifiers' in one's thought and language that do not coalesce into a stable 'ideal picture'. This is the place of dreaming of a dance of the Other, which is choreographed, tonalized and exchanged in unheard of combinations and mutations. The picture seems to be emerging as an experience of creative freedom between what happens within a structure of thought and understanding and how such a happening is interpreted to accord it a place within and outside one's belief systems. Such a reorientation of an experience rules out any closure of the connection between what we know and the freedom that our agency of knowing assumes for itself in extending it to a form of expression. As Antonio Artaud in his *Theater of Cruelty* had aptly stated,

> I propose to renounce this empiricism of images which the unconscious furnishes at random and which we throw off at random, calling them poetic and therefore hermetic images, as if that kind of trance that poetry provides did not have its reverberation throughout the whole sensibility, in all the nerves, and as if poetry were some vague force that did not vary its movements.[33]

Poetic movement of images beyond their representational and causal substrates in order to achieve a trance of reception is a cognitive freedom that reduces the soul of the spectator to a maze of vibrations, which is a distinctly worldly, physical and realized state of being that has a physical meaning, 'a reverberation throughout the whole sensibility'. Such meanings reverberate through the heart of things and beings that supports an interpretative deconstruction from inside a given form, as it does not only shake it from outside. This subjective

freedom of an economy of affect, which is a reverberating presence, 'a presence without presence-and-absence, without presence-nor-absence' best stated in a language that violates the logic of representation.[34] This is how poetry or literature as such deconstruct language of philosophy. Language is haunted with the 'ghost of deconstructions', a spectral 'negative capability' that possesses language to differences (emotional, existential, political) and leads to an 'abandonement' of language in 'trances and possessions'. This is what Peggy Kamuf has termed as a very different mode of thinking about literature, poetry, fiction and writing by 'dissolving' boundaries of genres of writing only in relation to 'sur-viving, super-living force'.[35] Humanities can reorient itself around this relation between language of literature and philosophy, between subjunctive and subjective, the two moods connection with subjugation, subjection and subordination. What happens between subjunctive and the subjective is a matter of Nietzscehan will-to-power and wandering outside this will.

This critical divergence between literature and philosophy open up the possibility of freedom of the human agency by instituting a context for new knowledge systems that are articulated on the margins of established hegemony of sciences and humanities, which is experienced as interventions, an opening towards an ethical acceptance of different alternatives.[36]

So the issue now can be posited in this way: does the unavoidable normativity of human understanding of alternatives resist the closure of disciplinary domain specific knowledge systems? Howsoever much the specific advances in domain-specific knowledge system attempts to foreclose the possibility of having limitations of any kind, there is an irreducible outside of problems that surpass those advances (pace Žižek). It is almost like a historical truism that returns to the center stage of knowledge often countering our much trusted faith in science or humanities and challenges them by way of exposing their limits and points to a beyond. One also struggles with the idea of optimality of one's choices in learning and knowing that juxtaposes the possibilities of freedom versus determination of schemes and frames of knowledge. The *antinomy* between radical contingency of a variety of new facts and an already predetermined or emergent structure of knowledge opens up a creative tension at any point of reference or at any margin of difference. This unleashes a deflationary as well as a normative reinforcement of cognitive-narrative agency of knowledge beyond any determination of 'who', 'what' and 'how' of knowledge.

What such a mutually reinforcing, interactive, co-participative and self-explosive nature of knowledge express is relation of gift or

hospitality instead of relations of dominance and subservience, which by itself is an offspring of creativity, an intrinsically humane substratum of all achievements of mind. In this paper an attempt will be made to explore the role of humanities in an increasingly post-human world in terms of a sense of losing the 'quintessential' and gaining what could be at best termed as pastiches and palimpsests. One can characterize this situation as a reality of fragmentation that haunts the stable frame of knowledge calls for continuous dialogues, encounters and reorientations of our 'focal points' as iterated on a series of disruptions in being 'swept' by its own works. This becomes a reflection on how human values and human sciences are on to the extent that it can only be recalled and re-instituted from its vainglorious past, a predicament that no progressive human enterprise should have fallen into. This recovery of humanities is a recovery of a variety of responses that one can make to assemblage of relational and co-implicated beings. The could be described by characterizing the experience of transformation,

> [It] amounts to experiencing a lack of exteriority, which is as much an absence of interiority, hence the impossible flight, the on the spot transformation. There is neither an inside nor an outside world. Consequently, the modification is all the more radical and violent; it fragments all the more readily. The worst dissensions of the subject with the self, the most serious conflicts, do not even look tragic. Paradoxically, they are signaled by indifference and coldness.[37]

This transformation of humanities is devoid of any subjectivity, which is very different from a conscious resistance to appropriation of its otherness. Such an emptiness in the process of becoming is the subject matter of what Malabou called 'overcoming' destructive plasticity of forms.[38] This could be overcome if reason and cognition are mutually supported by those affects that find its expression in academic and intellectual expressions of breaking out from set norms and beliefs.

So we enter here into a moment of restoration of a gradually declining language of reflexivity and self-understanding, a recovery of lived sense of fulfillment and the desire for achieving the esoteric and the uncanny. Without such acts desiring, reason and cognition do not work in co-ordination and do not relate to the unencumbered Other. This is quite paradoxical, as it calls for a certain museumization and stasis instead of a dynamic disequilibrium between the emergent and the present, the Other and the self. The current plight of discipline of humanities could be focused upon from this experiential shift from the

settled and the emergent, which is a critical and creative 'freewheeling' that the discipline of humanities does not know how to handle.

Does this signify a schizophrenic dissipation of acquired knowledge of the human and also a movement towards an abnegation of the experiences of dehumanization? Dehumanization is threefold: first losing a grip on reality by presenting an automated schema of objectification, codification and computation that negates any human context for knowledge; second disciplines of humanities cannot regain the lost space of subjectivity, emotion and expression; and thirdly, an account of socio-political, historical and scientific development blurs the line between ethical and unethical. The entire gamut of human knowledge stands only for its artifactuality, technicality and legitimacy, completely marginalizing lifelines of fellow feeling, empathy and giving without any expectation of return. This is a new age humanities that facilitates strategies of game playing over discovering the truth for oneself. The cruel and remorseless cultures of humanities succeed in throttling any attachment for the marginalized and thereby grossly undermine speaking for them or their own voices. Contrastingly social sciences in a large way retrieves the conditions and causes without being able to establish direct connections with its subjects. Ethnography merely collects testimonies of subjects by turning itself into a witness to this 'annihilation of senses'. Such testimonies only tell us how a pathological indifference to demands of the abandoned, as threads of life are cut in many different segments by those detours of remorselessness that professedly opens up other paths which are uncanny, unexpected and dark. This is manifest in the loss of symbolic reference points such as classic, gothic or experimental that is an indifference to the pain of loss, the burden of which accumulates that render the other into an ontological refugee lacking all correlation with the mainstream humanities. This is a separation that must also become a space of dialogue that can resist an absolute modification into another existence of humanities.

The techohumanist matchmaker

Annihilation of senses work through the advent of computational and strategic operations conducted by agents endowed with machine intelligence. That a supercomputer Deep Blue could defeat grandmaster Kasparov because of its flick-of-a-second evaluation of 700,000 past grandmaster strategies and examine some 200,000 positions is a totally different functionality. Such functionalities override human senses and its phenomenal qualities. The language of programming

breaks into the fundamentals of human reason and cognition to reproduce results in a superior and efficient manner. The situation is such that there is no way to recover those basic human senses in this grandiose scale of intelligence. Such programmed machinic consciousness cannot reproduce the lived experiences of human relations, but in a simulated environment of human relations, it can reproduce the effect of any human response such as emotions, expressions etc. The content and states remains isomorphic, while the agency of the human cannot be replaced by multi-agent intelligence. In terms of becoming, machines, therefore, can now performatively become superior to humans, yet they cannot assume self-consciousness. They may have consciousness of their tasks and acts, but they can neither have or lack self-consciousness. To draw such a distinction between human and machine intelligence one needs to creatively express a paradigm of difference between what is typically human and what is machinic.

The difference goes beyond a phenomenology of coupling, as it purveys what needs to be examined in both, which will never be identical. For example, human consciousness only examines its own self, a self-referential act and what is left for others is to just look at how it does so. The machinic mode of performance and the functionality of internal states require a symbolic anchoring in an architecture that hierarchically organizes the tasks achieved by consciousness in close parallel to human mind, language and brain.

This would then bring us back to a paradigm question such as Heidegger's 'What is Being?' As is known, Heidegger identified Being in terms of being-with, that is, a co-being who appropriates language and remains housed therein. Can human and machinic consciousness complement each other in close parallel of carrying a language within which they both are housed? Artistic representations or meaning constructions assume an unconscious of being-with in the space between itself and another as a subject of interplay with the other consciousness. Both human and machine can make a match with each other in this form of being-with qua play. The moment of play between being-with is simultaneously aporetic and gentrified. The play can functionally access and erase the very consciousness as a buffer on which the play is founded. This inter-subjective character of play can be communicated and reflected upon post-facto by machine simulation that would require fixing agent, ideas, responses and reflexes. Once fixed in an intelligible manner, the machine can reproduce the play in phases and cycles, of which it could be functionally conscious without, of course, having consciousness. So, being able to play gives birth to a consciousness that by filling the gap between the human

and the machine. This filling the gap gives rise to wandering images of 'deep machine learning'. The posthuman subject can assume a vision about this play of subjectivity in the machine. Yet the machine as a player will occupy the place and function of another participant, as it could not have shared the space between itself and the world – as such a space is qualitatively constituted by the consciousness-at-work, the co-being that experiences an aporia of the other subject. This fine distinction between machine inter-play and inter-human aporia of intersubjective experience as well its crisscross in the space between human and machine is an epistemic-enunciatory source of distinction between specie-consciousness and identity consciousness, between humans and machines. This is made possible if and only if the world is open to a play of consciousness, which humanities can capture only by technology that comes after breaching the logic of representation. Such a possibility remains 'unrepresentable' as it is aporetic as well as a matter of deep machine learning. Such a peculiarly unrepresented world of our humano-machinic intersubjectivity would remain open to knowledge and understanding if it is continually constituted as an irreducible exterior of both technology and humanities, a space that is inappropriable in the factories of knowledge.

Gerald Raunig in his powerful 'Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity'[39] presented two arguments in precisely identifying this situation of play and aporia in knowledge. He argued that 'what was once the factory is now the university'.[40] He explained it by comparing discipline and subjection of the factory with 'reterritorialization of disciplines' that can decentre the autonomous free spaces of knowledge production within the university by simultaneously modulating and subjecting the students and teachers to this new function of knowledge termed as 'concentration' of their potential as learners or researchers within the site of the university. The second interesting argument that Raunig developed is that such sites of concentration of potential does not help functions of learning, researching or resisting, but it helps in producing a mere 'stance' towards doing all that. This stance of knowledge is playing the game of knowledge in the site of concentration through different competences, different subject positions that moves through a hierarchy of specializations and techniques. He termed this play of different potentialities as 'conceiving subject positionings as machinic relations, positing relations and modes of subjectivation'[41] and this is what constitutes going to school or university today. The concern is that playing out as part of knowledge factory limits knowledge in situations and in positions that experiences the *tamasha* of what Raunig called 'gentle streak of the territory' such that

one occupies everything and demands nothing, a voiceless embraced by way of an 'existential break' from existence. Such consequence of reterritorialization by an interaction between social body of the multitude and the technological network of messaging and tweeting does not make the play a singular experience of freedom, but confines it within the critique of self-critique of academia. This is an experience of simultaneously immaterial, cognitive and affective forms of knowledge as well as a 'conglomeration of precariousness'. Raunig introduced the label 'Post-Fordist cognitive capitalism' to describe the situation of the university. Can one understand this self-induced transformation of the situation of knowledge by being caught in this precarious dissolution of the distinction between agency of game makers and playing the game as an existential *tamasha*? As reterritorialization happens within academia, one cannot just play on the game without a minimal sense of agency that calls forth a basic distinction between the human and the machine.

This need for opening up, lighting up and playing is not a mere hermeneutic circle of going back to an originary consciousness of who we are, or a machinic reproduction and simulation of possible worlds, but it is a creative return to a moment of being self-consciousness without a baggage of predetermined inputs. This return is expressible only in a language of play that arises in the play. The paradigmatic science of nature as well as forms of creative expression are both contained in this making play legible in the world. It is the altered sameness of play, the dis-play of its opening up the play to a play on the play. What captures this play is neither the 'factories of knowledge' nor the 'industries of creativity' but the possibility of playing a game of knowledge. Can one play this game of subsuming the play of the world into disciplines and categories of knowledge? If one tries to do so, one would invert play into 'game'. Gaming could be a form of playing the game, communicating and redefining the art of playing and tactics of players, but it would sordidly miss that the play can never annul itself playing.

Humanities need to reinscribe itself in this world of play between discipline and a recovery of self-consciousness by being a partner in the game of knowledge. The question is, can the reduplication and multiplication of being human in such situations that create a blurred interface between humans and machines bring back the human of humanism? The anomalous signification of human in the machine and machine in the figuration of human capabilities does not relieve itself in an absolute opposition, but blurs the space between them by playing a game of participatory simulations. Jean Baudrillard described it as simulacral forms of construction of bodies, spaces and concepts

that enter into a floating difference of significations.[42] The difference eternally delays cognitive subjectivity of rules, frames and bodies that might create a human-machine interface in a self-organized space. The simulacral form of difference is a unique experience of displacement and replacement of 'human' as an event in a temporal space of flux, to which the human subjectivity plays a spectator/witness to. This experience is often mis-described as erasure of self or agency, but certainly marks a departure from an apriorized noumenal self-certitude to a play of multi-agentative consciousness in the growing cognitive space between machine and human, a simulacra of cognitive capital. The question is how does one reinscribe the idea of being human in this space of blurring? Is the distinction between ground and existence of being human is lost in the blurring of the distinction between human and machine in the interface between them?

Transhumanities deal with spectatorial / witnessing subjectivity. The Post-Fordist Cognitive Capitalism's absence of a fortuitous subjectivity that holds the spirit of capital in its adventures of knowledge is itself spectralized. The separation of ground and existence, the way it is done in understanding human freedom, loses its power in the human-machine interface, as the latter only occupies a space in-between. This space is limited by an immaterial simulacra of knowledge that presents itself as a show or picture or spectre to the world opened up by human intersubjectivity. The question is, can human intersubjectivity position such a spectrum of codes and signs without positing an unilluminated speculation[43] of the dark unconscious of evil, eros and utopia and the like? The answer lies in partly a recovery of human responsibility towards the nonhuman other which is an exterior to this domain of human subjectivity that imposes a symbolic order over the imaginary of the knowledge of the precarious. What is precarious is an ontology of modification that must spell out a farewell to being within humanities just it is possible to give farewell within life.

Does this farewell to being in life create a new ontology of recovery? The terms of reference of this farewell and recovery takes an anti-reductionist stance of accepting testimonies of public faith, which engages with performance of roles and duties in the social context in a manner free from both effect and affect. It is a return to what body and mind together can do: a return to how the self sees itself in all its diverse transaction with the Other. In a sense the spectatorial subjectivity of the social symbolic conception of norm, truth and value is included in this anti-reductionist stance towards the nonhuman other. Such a stance could identify the core notion of being a person in all nonhuman other with a nervous system, as they can suffer and struggle

to survive like the humans.[44] Humanism's human needs to take this testimony of suffering from a sense of being related with those creatures that should have greater incremental freedom of movement and life in the absence of neurocortex, which is a mere structural absence that places greater responsibility on the humans towards those who do not have a moral standing just because they do not have full personhood. The immaterial simulacra of human knowledge can engage itself with this new question of rights of nonhuman species to orient itself towards moral claims from nonhuman species.[45] Gruen argued that moral claims of nonhuman specie are like 'showing up on a moral radar screen',[46] which is a metaphor of a *bioanthropological* machine that serves as a metaphor for setting up a non-instrumental moral relationship *with and beyond* the toolness of machines. Relationship with machines, an inevitable fact of life, does not allow rights to things like iPhone, drones or gadgets of surveillance but it certainly sets up a moral relationship between the human and the larger surroundings that unveils a certain ontological significance of 'organic and technological flesh'[47] to machines. This significant ontological stuff makes up what humans lack and extends it beyond the limits of conception of an other to whom the humans respond in a certain way. Human response to the organic and technological flesh assumes the form of the ethical as it does not constrain human responses to mere 'doing the right thing' or 'falling in love' which are all in store. Rather human response could move towards a unanticipatable future that is beyond elimination of Ebola or evolution of a better generation of nanomachines. It is in this sense a post-machinic humanism that overcomes the polarities of both transhuman and posthuman.

The transhuman strangeness of a drone or robot to ethics can be opened up to a posthuman construction of moral and just machines that makes violation of human rights and dignity impossible. Such moral machines can partner with the moral community of humans in the sense of both determined and undetermined. It is determined in the sense of acquired belief and knowledge about machine environment and it is undetermined in the sense of being machinic agent's interaction outside its environment. A more complicated form of this transhuman possibility lies in prosthetics of absent means, substitution of evolutionary agents by digitized reconstructed fragments of functions in an artistic impression that now does not require a nonhuman or a human presence in a Hegelian material of 'in-itself of consciousness'. This upsurge of in-itself is a changeable and recognizable 'feeling relationship' with the body of the other is *einkineasthetic*, that is, it gets its inner states in touch with other's feelings. Without qualia of this

kind, there can be no phenomenologically einkineasthetic entanglement, that is, no co-agency; and with no co-agency, there can be no conscious agency. The transhuman character of machine consciousness makes a match with human co-agent so that 'compositional, multidimensional, associational, entangled and co-implicated' distribution of things and their senses can affect an einkineasthesia. When such an einkineasthesia combined with (1) the freedom of self-movement that the plant has and (2) the moral personhood that could be assigned to animals like whales and dolphins and (3) the reciprocity of inner feeling between machines and human-machine interface, it is possible to reach at the limit of the human in humanities and open up the world of the transhuman through adaptation to techniques of knowing. These techniques are narrated in a disjunction between human language and metalinguistically projected animality, plantness and machineness within language. This disjunction makes several matches between disparate and different exteriors of being human, which are entirely outside human othering. Such matches between anomalies of human, plant, animal on the one hand and on the other the biological and the artificial remain entirely beholden to an absolute exterior that overcomes the reciprocal distinction between identity and difference. Such matching discursivity lights up a new world of images, concepts and ideas that deny any sublation in human language and consciousness by matching them with human parallels and at the same time transcending and overcoming the burdensome anthropology of human thinking. One would better call this matching and overcoming relation with an absolute non-reciprocal distinction with other as a reserve for transhuman and technohuman frontier of human quest for life. The incommensurability between all such other world with the human worlds can now be negotiated in match-making between the transhumant and the techno-human that would move into an area of inviolable metaphysical boundaries. These boundaries now need to be understood in technohuman and transhumant terms outside our preprogrammed schemes of knowledge. One is invited to think beyond the spiritual and the cognitive in order to respond to this call of the Other. Responding to such a call would lead us to rediscovery of the other humaneness that will purvey a thoroughgoing and unmatchable challenge of detranscendentalization of being human.

The simulacral science

Quite contrary lines of imagination prevails in a social science such as economics. Does economics have to go back to pain or to dissatisfaction

with commodities as a justification for commodification? Could everyone's selfish behaviour be the basis for determination of my choices? Does economics promote a kind of falsification of the authentic or promises sundering of immaterial values? Is it then the case that valuing values turn out to be valuing contraries and participating in those contraries? Do such instances of inadequation of values simply disturb the funny little balance that we draw between morality and economics? Is this ultimately, then, a process of purging the humane out of humanities and what humanities cannot do is achieved in the process by social sciences? A transverse complementarity of predatoriness in an ecosystem of quantification and programming cannot bring out the emotions of justice and fairness, but certainly it can produce a simulacra of objectivity in/by what we inadequately call sciences. Do sciences keep a record of their inadequacies, or look for a reasonable and indulgent shelter of poetic sublimity in other forms of cultural creativity? Why then unskilled but consoling humanities has to give in to a repression of its finer practices? More calculative social sciences mixes up several such antinomies: security as military build-up, prosperity as peace, extraction as development, etc. Statistics hide and reveal: those who do not pay taxes, a mere declaration is good enough to make all the money white and counted. Surrender to such tactics of intelligence that are 'masterful' in keeping others guess about what counts emerges as the ruling and the 'manufactured' simulacra of humanities.

The heterogeneity of multiple means and registers in/of reducing oneself or a problem at hand into a subject of manipulative solution seemingly occupy a place of importance within a posthuman, postideological and postepistemological research paradigm. In the marvelous journey from a world of *cogito ergo sum* to a world of split-brain selves to genetically engineered clones draw its parallels in superseded states of teleportations, a world that moved far away from binaries and trinaries to transitive relations. Relations of the kind that signifies bottomlessness of being-with can't be logical or illogical anymore, but simply stand with a potential for caring. The question is, *how can life events fall in line with such indeterminacy of care and do not jump the sequence of undecodable informational states of their Subjects*? One would do well to remember that Wittgenstein asserted that it is not mere moonshine to know that calculation differs from 'experiment', just as poetry is not a psychological experiment and pain is 'not a behaviour'. Such knowledge is not 'tacit' (in Michael Polanyi's sense) but arises out of a fundamental aporia within the very constitution of what we know as 'knowledge'. It rather indicates or points at what cannot be stated within knowledge, but only can be distinguished by

its sense or meaning, instead of drawing out an objective line of difference. Is difference of sense a function of beliefs that arise not from within knowledge but from the way we construct language with markers of differences? Is it then the case that differential markers follow from folk beliefs without any corresponding foundations within the body or scheme or framework of knowledge? How does one describe this sense of making and marking distinctions within the functions of language that is supposed to reproduce knowledge by preserving its 'truth conditions' that are out there in life and praxis? Or, alternatively, is it an instance of what Agamben quipped, '[i]n the non-truth of the subject, there is no truth in any form,'[48] and what Taussig termed as 'imitation of the effects' of truth in ordinary language.[49]

Indeed such philosophical preoccupations of setting folk beliefs against conditions of knowing that adjust itself into a coherent system of fitting with each other resulted into purging of philosophy as *pharmakon* – as poison and cure simultaneously, an unresolvable ambivalence that persists today as a kind of *paraconsistency* and *dialetheia* in language. In Graham Priest's terminology, 'beingless objects' and 'objectless beings' with their impossible property complement each other to open up 'existence' to a double *aletheia* of a structure consisting of both the limit of the possible and opening toward the impossible, which no semantic theory can accommodate.[50] This linguistically unaccommodable limit of the possible and the opening toward the impossible arises in 'true contradictions' embedded in phenomena that makes it possible for the being to respond to what comes from a certain outside of language. Experiences of such dialethiea can combine with what is an absolute reserve of language in simulating a Science out of it that is aware of is reflexive shortcomings. Wittgenstein's distinction between 'pain with pain behaviour' and 'pain without pain behaviour'[51] is an instance of experiential and existential dialethiea in humans, which he expressed elliptically, 'It's not a Something, but not a Nothing either', a true contradiction in terms,[52] whose *object* of description is not something and yet nothing either. In psychoanalytic terms it is a *double reversal of the drive*-toward the object and toward itself, a psycho-linguistic device that can never separate 'drive' from language. In other words, language and its contexts of use are pulled towards a reflexive cognitive gaze, a kind of reading off the features of language in abstraction from language itself that finds its place within the larger frame of understanding of the world. One may say that language constitutes the very world in which it finds itself, it not only represents that world in the world, but it also opens itself unto the world in its abstract rules in the very process of being signified as a language.

This is how language becomes a dialetheic entity: it reflects upon itself in order to show that it reflects or captures the world, which it cannot do without creating a binary opposition between the word and the world only to create a true contradiction between representation and reality. This contradiction is often the source of conceptualization of a perfect language (as in Carnap and Schlick), metalanguage (as in Chomsky and Jackendoff, etc.) or rule-following language game in the Wittgensteinian sense. Wittgenstein explained this dialetheic nature of language without an anthropomorphic commitment when he commented, 'language is a labyrinth of paths'[53] or 'square root of minus 1' cannot be determined in mathematics, or by bringing words back from their metaphysical to everyday use.[54] This approach to language without a deep interior of structural rules is a rejection of a culture of determination or certitude. In other words, a rejection of the binary opposition between word and world leads one to posit what Nagarjuna might say as:

> If there is no essence,
> What could become other?
> If there is essence,
> What could become other?[55]

The dialetheic trace and erasure of the other brings out the 'true contradiction' of a supposedly determined interior that cannot exclude the opposite or the other term in a relationship of contradiction, which in itself assumes the form of an essence only to reverberate the question back to itself. This is taking part in the same by being an other without making otherness into an *essent* in any way. But answering a question about any other possibility of an other or of a different site in an explanatorily determinate mode creates a conduit of contradictions with the reality of no such 'essence'. Every determination of real is interfered with an irreducibly different other, the precession of reality without the real. The real is produced from vector spaces of high dimensionality, from miniaturized cells, matrices, memory banks and hyperspaces, and it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times from these. This creates polarities between real and reality, between place and non-places, between place and space, which can neither be completely erased nor written down. This is the space of technohumanities and its enworlded matrix of human-machine relations, where there are only intersections between bodies and imaginaries in a temporalized mode. Indeed such relations only crosses, transgresses and shots into workstations of multiple drafts running parallel to words

and terms stemming from multiple concerns and conversations. The situation is aptly described as 'buffer sense', which is,

> The perception loop [that] checks for a global consistency between the internal model and the visual data coming from the sensors [of the system]. In fact, the algorithm previously described could choose the winning hypothesis not only on the basis of the immediate match as previously described, but also by taking into account the global consistency of the model in space and in time.[56]

The situation is further interpreted in the context of a prior consciousness of synthetic functions in perception that is generated in a robotic vision. The perceptional hypothesis lies in replacing the world of humanities with a world of instrumentalities that transfers human cognition to technohuman apps and reprogramable programs,

> The perception loop generated by means of the high-dimensional buffer is therefore the place where the synthetic phenomenal experience arises: the two flows of information, the internal and the external, compete for a consistent match. There is an analogy with the phenomenology in human perception: when a person perceives the objects of a scene, he actually experiences only the surfaces that are in front of him, but at the same time he builds a geometric interpretation of the objects in their whole shape. In 'gestaltian' terms, the robot in the described example perceives the whole armchairs and columns and not their visible sides only.[57]

This irreducible exterior in which vision does not move but constitutes an object of vision develops a transductive-representational 'reprogrammable programme' of dependent cognition in the robot. The dividing line between humanities and sciences gets blurred here in a 'self-expanding system of dependencies' that records the conceptual and intellectual oppositions which itself are opposed by variables of suspicion and seduction. In Bruno Latour's words,

> Humanoids become humans by dint of association with the beings of technology, fiction, and reference; they became skillful, imaginative, capable of objective knowledge by grappling with these modes of existence (language games . . . which externalize and articulate thought).[58]

In other words, there is a parallel and intermittent transition between humans and other such associated technological beings that provide new hold over a world of becoming expressible in art, poetry or computer simulations. The daily archive of technohumanities remains open in this manner of skillful association with humanoids to alleviate the notion of humane to a gradual, evolved and collected assemblage of immaterial multiples of these sense-endowing acts. This archive is a holographic Panopticon, bar coded and digitized, marking an absent presence (gestalt) of the signified with diverse functions such as surveillance and learning. The archive does not follow the rules that form a system of statements, rather it turns out to be a series of 'correspondence' between what is interpreted out of it and what passes on as events with and without being 'caught' in an insensate cycle of intensities of love-hate. The archive remains a déjà vu of transformations in relation to theory and praxis that does not retain singularity of the real, a 'process without the subject', while it expresses a certain thematic vacillation.[59] This vacillation is between historical sets that do not allow a stable or fixed conjuncture in order to keep the historical scenes non-self-identical and self-differing in the absence of the identical, which again, is a movement from fidelity to successive interruptions by other forces and ideas. The picture is beautifully summed up:

> It's a double idea of passages and constants: networks are composed of heterogeneous elements, and something circulates through them, thus they are discontinuous (hiatuses between heterogeneous elements) and yet have trajectories and direction, continuous passes or passages through alternations and differences. To say something is to say something differently, to translate, to metamorphose, to metaphorize; but there are constants too: the angles of origami, or the immutable mobiles across maps, photos, surveying lines, satellite images, and the ground.[60]

The picture is a vacillating phenomenon of human capability of thinking, knowing and creating technologies, none of which assure a certitude of foundations and techniques that turns contradictions against itself, only to end up with a kind of alteration and difference.

In lieu of conclusion

In this interpreted-interrupted milieu of transhumanities, there is always a hermeneutically structured aporia between sense and technique, which leads to execution-implementation model of ideas, which

is putting ideas-into-action. As human sense casts its unremovable spell on infinity of presentations of the ideas and actions on an open world, can the identify of 'being human' be conceived as partitioned according to the diverse meanings of the concept of human, or alternatively construct one fragment of it from another? Is it that the practice of humanities now comes and goes as interruptions on signification and communication of human feelings and emotions that assigns itself a self and an Other? Is the presence of such a discursive, self-mutilated, plastic and yet modifying existence of humanities relate itself to all that is human, or merely maintains an impersonal perspectival distance in order to speak for the human? Significantly when the multiple expressions of human emotions do not fit into a stereotype of being rational, scientific and artistic, it only adds to the unhomeliness of humanities. Further, the embarrassing moment of not being able to speak of what is interiorized as humane also remains as a moment of fielding humanities among other skills, values and knowledges that cannot necessarily break the obstacles of its transitive dis-location. Yet an enchantment is produced with the unpatented non-objects and non-subjects of humanities that probably inspires a state of bafflement and withdrawal. Is it then necessary to overcome the limits of humanities by transhuman moments, or better, in a play of transhumanities with its ecological, technological and prosthetic interlopers. Can we make a deal with such interlopers in our own terms? Or must we merely remain bystanders when these interlopers take over humanities from the humans themselves?

Notes

1 Catherine Malabou and Judith Butler. 2011. You Be My Body for Me: Body, Shape, and Plasticity in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. In Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (Eds.), *A Companion to Hegel*. Stanford, CA: Blackwell Companions to Philosophy, Wiley Blackwell, pp. 611–640. Malabou defines plasticity as the capacity to change by continuing to function as a total organism.

2 Jacques Derrida. 2008. Heidegger's Hand (*Geschlecht II*). In Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Eds.), *Psyche: Invention of the Other*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 27–62. See, p. 42.

3 BT:141.

4 J. M. Coetzee. 2003. *Elizabeth Costello*, second edn. New York: Viking, p. 1.

5 Martin Heidegger. 2010. *Being and Time* [1927], Joan Stambaugh (Trans.). New York: SUNY Press, p. 321. Henceforth BT.

6 Jacques Derrida. 1981. The Double Session. In Barbara Johnson (Trans.), *Dissemination*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, p. 268.

7 Martin Heidegger. 1996. Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister", William McNeill and Julia Davis (Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 81, 115 and 117. Henceforth, HH.
8 Krzystof Ziarek. 2000. Proximities: Irigaray and Heidegger on Difference. *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 33, pp. 133–158.
9 HH:121.
10 HH:117.
11 Louis Althusser. 1969. *For Marx*, Ben Brewer (Trans.). Harmondworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, pp. 228–230.
12 Hilary Putnam. 1990. *Realism With a Human Face*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 33–34.
13 Jean Paul Sartre. 1992. *Notebooks for an Ethics* (1983), David Pellaeur (Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 508.
14 Catherine Malabou. 2012. *Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*, Carolyn Shread, Trans. London: Polity Press, p. 49, where she explained the phenomenon of 'accidental ageing' that arises like an instantaneous trauma, which could be treated by memory traces of the past as well as by transforming those into a new person by a breach. It reveals the incapacity of the self in revealing, but this incapacity establishes a continuum with the past just as it identifies the Other as the other in a 'plastic ambiguity' (p. 54), that is, the ambiguity of the same in the Other, while the Other remains as other, different.
15 Michael Taussig. 1987. *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 218.
16 Michael Taussig. 1993. *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. New York and London: Routledge, p. 52.
17 Ibid., p. 143.
18 Richard Rorty. 1989. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 105. Henceforth CIS.
19 Richard Rorty. 1991. *Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers*, Vol. II. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 66–82. Henceforth, EHO.
20 EHO:76.
21 EHO:72.
22 Wolfgang Müller-Lauter. 1999. *Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of His Philosophy*, David J. Parent, Trans. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, pp. 5, 7–11.
23 Friedrich Nietzsche. 1989. *The Genealogy of Morals*, Walter Kauffman (Trans.). London: Vintage Books Edition, III:12, p. 119. Henceforth GM.
24 Friedrich Nietzsche. 1966. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of Future*, Walter Kauffman (Trans. with Commentary). New York: Vintage Random House edition, p. 2. Henceforth BGE.
25 Friedrich Nietzsche. 1974. *The Gay Science*, Walter Kauffman (Trans.). London: Vintage Random House edition, p. 342.
26 'Preface' in GM, p. 15.
27 Nietzsche raised this question in the Preface of GM. See, p. 19.
28 Michael Marder. 2009. *The Event of the Thing: Derrida's Post-Deconstructive Realism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, p. 89.

29 Boris Groys. 2012. *Introduction to Antiphilosophy*. London: Verso, pp. 158–159.
30 Ibid.
31 This is the radical contingency of human subject that does not hold its own ground as absolute, rather it shows off its own constitutive lack of emptiness in opening up to an alternative, that is, to a sense of freedom that takes one where ones courage takes one to. See, Søren Kierkegaard. 1985. *Philosophical Fragments, Kierkegaard's Writings VII*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 16–17.
32 Slavoj Žižek. 1990. Beyond Discourse-Analysis in "Afterword." In Ernesto Laclau, (Ed.), *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. London: Verso, pp. 249–260.
33 Antonin Artaud. 1988. For the Theater and Its Double. In Susan Sontag (Ed.), *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, pp. 215–276. See, p. 257.
34 Jacques Derrida. 2002. *H.C.pour la vie, c'est 'a dire . . .* Paris: Galilée, pp. 91–101.
35 Cited from Ginette Michaud and Sarah-Anais Crevier Goulet. 2006. Derrida and Cixous: Between and Beyond, or "What to the Letter Has Happened". *New Literary History*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Winter, pp. 85–106. See, n.32 on p. 99.
36 Marshall Sahlins. 1985. *Islands of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 153–154.
37 Catherine Malabou. 2012. *Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*, Carolyn Shread (Trans.). London: Polity Press, p. 14.
38 Ibid., p. 11. Malabou suggested overcoming by way of giving place to the Other who does not conform to the will of the self/agent.
39 Gerald Raunig. 2013. *Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e). Henceforth abbreviated FKIC.
40 FKIC, pp. 51–52.
41 FKIC, p. 61.
42 Jean Baudrillard. 1981. *Simulacra and Simulation* (in French). Paris: Editions Galilee.
43 Walter Benjamin. 1964. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections on Brecht, Kafka, Baudelaire and Proust*. New York: Pantheon Books, Bollingen series. Benjamin argued that the community of listeners disappeared from the work of art. Rather the work of art became the effects of an apparatus such that the actor and the spectator cannot be separated from an aura of 'moving images'. This resulted into a spectacle that requires no concentration from the spectator.
44 J. Dunayer. 2013. The Right of Sentient Beings: Moving Beyond Old and New Speciesism. In R. Corbey and A. Lanjouw (Eds.), *The Politics of Species: Reshaping Our Relationship With Other Animals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 27–39. See, p. 35.
45 "2010 Declaration of the Rights of Cetaceans: Whales and Dolphins." www.cetaceanrights.org [Accessed 22 October 2014].
46 L. Gruen. 2012. The Moral Status of Animals. In *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, E. N. Zalta (Ed.). http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win 2012/entries/moral animal

47 Donna Haraway. 2008. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, p. 12.
48 Giorgio Agamben. 2006. *Che cos'è un dispositivo*? (in Italian) Roma: Nottetempo.
49 Taussig, supra note 16.
50 Graham Priest. 1995. *Beyond the Limits of Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. See, p. 122.
51 Ludwig Wittgenstein. 2009. *Philosophical Investigations*, G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Kacker and Joachim Schulte (Trans.), 4th edn. London: Wiley Blackwell, section 281. Henceforth PI.
52 PI, Section 304.
53 PI, section 203.
54 PI, Section 116.
55 Cf. Jay L. Garfield and Graham Priest. 2003. Nāgārjuna and the Limits of Thought. *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 53, No. 1, January, pp. 1–21. Cited from p. 9 where the authors cited from Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamādhyamikakārika*, section XV, aphorism 9.
56 Antonio Chella and Salvatore Gaglio. 2012. Synthetic Phenomenology and High Dimensional Buffer Hypothesis. *International Journal of Machine Consciousness*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 353–365. See, p. 362.
57 Ibid., p. 363.
58 Bruno Latour. 2013. *An Inquiry Into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Modern*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 372.
59 Jean Claude Milner. 2012. The Point of the Signifier. In Peter Hallward and Knox Peden (Eds.), *Concept and Form, Vol.1, Key Texts From the cahiers pour l'Analyse*. London and New York: Verso, pp. 107–118.
60 Michael M. J. Fischer. 2014. The Lightness of Existence and the Origami of "French" Anthropology: Latour, Descola, Viveiros de Castro, Meillassoux, and Their So-Called Ontological Turn. *Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 331–355. See, p. 336.

8 Some staccato observations on interactive studies

Rajendra Prasad

Humanities and sciences (including social, natural, and formal) have formed constitutive segments of university education since ages. Our academic attitude towards, or assessment of, their diversified utility might have changed in different periods of history, but their desirability as fields in which education should be imparted has never been questioned. Philosophy is generally put under humanities. There may not be anything seriously wrong in doing that, but this practice may make a not-very-alert student forget an important and distinctive feature of it. Though philosophy is an independent discipline with the same status as any other, it is categorically different from others in one respect: It can make any discipline, even itself, a subject of its scrutiny. The scrutiny which it then does, does not form an area of that discipline; it becomes a bona fide area of philosophy itself. For example, a philosophical study of social sciences (or mathematics) is not an area of any social science (or mathematics) but one of philosophy. And so is a philosophy of philosophy, say, a philosophical study of the nature of philosophical reasoning, or of the status of philosophical statements. We may, and sometimes do, call them meta-philosophical. But a meta-philosophical study remains philosophical. John Passmore's *Philosophical Reasoning* is as correctly catalogued as a philosophical book as is Richard Rudner's *Philosophy of Social Sciences*. Philosophy seems to behave like a woman who has in herself a built-in capacity to mother any child whoever may be its father. And, neither philosophers nor non-philosophers bother about the identity of the father.

A historian may make a similar claim for his discipline by pointing out that there may also be history of other disciplines. But this claim is not like the philosophy's. A work on the history of another discipline, say, a history of philosophy, would belong to philosophy and not to history.

What has been said above is the case because philosophy is basically a conceptual inquiry. It can choose to analyze any concept, belonging to any area of thought or action, whose analysis is likely to help us think better or do better, to see things which we do not see, or see wrongly, or see from a wrong angle. It may choose to analyze the primal concept of *doing*, or *trying to do*, say, even doing or trying to do philosophy, or sociology, etc. Philosophical training, if done meticulously, using hard-core reading materials, in a sophisticated, precisifying manner, can play an important role in university education, namely, the role of strengthening the conceptual grip of the educatee's on whatever theme he studies or works on.

Philosophical research, too, if done well, must contribute to making philosophical progress by adding something to the existing fund of knowledge. A philosopher may do that in so many ways if he is critical and creative, He would if

1 He is lucky enough to have a problem of his own and some concept or concepts to handle it, or
2 He picks up some problem and concepts from an existing theory and using them as bricks and blocks presents a new theory, connecting them with his own logical mortar in a new and sustainable manners, or
3 He draws some new implications from the theory, no matter congenial or incongenial to it, or
4 He analyzes the arguments given by the theorizer for his theory and proves them to be yielding a different theory, or
5 He accepts the theory but gives for it a new set of arguments better than the ones given by its propounder, or
6 Proves that the theory is included in, or implied by, another theory and therefore is redundant, or
7 He presents the theory in a new, more elegant format, using a new conceptual framework, etc., etc.

Philosophy as well as a social science, or any science, for that matter, is, in principle, an autonomous inquiry, not subjugated to any other, or to a political or religious ideology. This autonomy has to be respected in the sense that each one of them has to be studied and *taught in the way it ought to be*, i.e., as per the demands of its subject-matter, objective, and methodology. For example, philosophy ought to be taught the way it ought to be, and not, for example, the way the foreign affairs policy of a government wants it to be taught. Only then there

can be a meaningful give and take between any two disciplines, say, philosophy and political science.

Autonomy of an inquiry is an academic or intellectual feature of it which gives to it its *identity* or *individuality*. It allows or welcomes its practitioners' moving into any other inquiry which is likely to supply some fresh blood to its veins and thereby enable it to solve some of its problems in a better way than it did earlier. Autonomy does not mean or imply isolationism.

A philosopher's interaction with a social scientific work, or a work of any other discipline, would be *genuine* only if a *philosophical need* motivates him to make it and he has the discriminative ability to decide which social scientific research is relevant to the problem he is faced with. Suppose a theologically oriented social scientist collects some media reports of some individuals' narrating that they did such and such things in their previous birth as such and such individuals in such and such families and claims them to be verified. A philosopher takes them to be empirical data and claims them to be proving the classical Indian theory of rebirth. This would be a pseudo, non-genuine interaction between philosophy and social science because neither the philosopher, nor the scientist, takes note of some serious logical infelicities in the very constitution of the theory of rebirth. Even the alleged scientist's data collection is not a neat scientific work because it is polluted with a theological bias.

Genuine interaction with a social scientific work can thus be made only by a creative philosopher who has a philosophical problem, reaction, or theory of his own, and the reason for his entry into a social science is also philosophical. John Dewey, in his philosophical venture to present his logical theory, examines the ways in which a social scientist draws his conclusions from empirical data, and gives a logic different from Frege-Russell formal-mathematical logic in his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1939). So does F.C.S. Schiller, a little earlier, in a more practical, easy-to-use manner in his *Logic for Use* (1932). Before doing what they did, both had exhibited their critical-creative abilities as philosophers.

The motivation of a philosopher to enter into another discipline to get some new insight springs from his maturity and expertise in his own area of specialization. His abilities in his own field urge him to branch off in some other directions. The best way for a philosopher to be able to make use of the insights of some other discipline is *only to do philosophy well*. Therefore, an organization which wants to produce interactive philosophers can succeed in its venture only by creating conditions in which philosophy educatees and researchers get as

best a kind of training in philosophy as possible. It is true that there has not been in India a noticeable interaction between philosophers and scientists. If for this lapse philosophers are to be blamed, no less are the scientists to be blamed. The same is true of the agencies concerned with promoting researches in philosophy and sciences. If any change is needed in the structure of one, it is equally needed in that of the other. I am not suggesting, or implying, that any change in the structure of anyone is needed. I only aver that our efforts to train educatees in humanities and sciences need to be very greatly strengthened. I also aver, even with greater force, that all researches do not have to be interactive. Interactive researches are needed, but it is not that only they are needed. The intrinsic dignity of the individuality of philosophy as a discipline in its own right must never be forgotten or compromised. Only then philosophy can interact, and be interacted, with any other discipline. Produce good philosophers; you would not have to worry about interactive studies, or about preparing tailor-made philosophical programmes to suit medico-technological education. And to do that you have to ensure conditions for offering hard-core, logic-based, philosophical training in university education, prompting educatees to think freely without any bias for or against what their grandparents have said.

What I have said about the interaction between philosophy and social sciences can be said about that between any discipline with any other or others with only some suitable terminological changes.

9 Imaginaries of ignorance

Five ideas of the university and the place of the humanities within them

Rukmini Bhaya Nair

Education is never suicidal.
The Athenian Stranger in Plato's 'Laws'
(fourth century BCE)

It will be pointed out in vain that the Greeks and Romans had neither a University nor a Great Master, and that things didn't go badly for them.
Jacques Ranciere in 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster'
(late twentieth century)

The humanities are outdated.
Anubhuti Kapoor, Indian graduate student, psychology
(twenty-first century)

Much has changed since the Athenian Stranger in Plato defended the life-affirming qualities of an education in 'the humanities', broadly defined. He described such an education as 'convivial', meaning that it was committed to conversational give-and-take and to extending the idea of the human community so that new and strange modes of being and thought were not dismissed without a hearing. Today, however, a student of psychology can summarily dismiss a humanities education as 'outdated'. It may be convivial, but years spent reading books and then criticising them hardly serve much purpose in a university system meant to equip students with the skills needed to live a robust intellectual life *outside* academic protectorates.

This chapter will approach the vexed question of the role of the humanities in our universities and in our lives by using two philosophical key texts as 'touchstones' (see Arnold 1965 [1869]). The first of these is Plato's 'Laws', dating back to the fourth century BCE; and the second is Jacques Ranciere's provocatively titled *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*,

published in 1987 but written in the aftermath of France's tumultuous, if short-lived, student revolt of 1968. It is true that Ranciere is mordantly critical of what he sees as the hectoring dominance of the 'Master' in the faux-equitable Socratic question-and-answer method that Western academia tends to privilege as exemplary practice; at the same time, it is apparent that his text and that of his Platonic predecessor share not just traditions but radical perspectives in common. Like the Athenian Stranger in the 'Laws', Ranciere's historical hero Joseph Jacotot (to whose views we will come shortly) presents a philosophy that seeks to reverse the relationship between ignorance and knowledge and between practical wisdom and book-learning. Both voices in effect suggest that the hegemony of the latter promotes a conception of education that is deeply unequal. This inherent and systemic inequality amounts to continuous 'civil war' in peace-time, as Plato's interlocutor smartly put it 2500 years ago; further, it seems to continue unabated in world institutions today. The particular institution we will focus on in this chapter is the contemporary university.

Two hundred years ago, Thomas Carlyle, following the route espoused by Plato's Stranger, declaring with magisterial certitude that "the true university of these days is a collection of books". Intellectual guides, fellow scholars, heroes even, were now to be discovered within the convivial pages of books. In this chapter, I seek to imagine the contours of a 'true university' in the twenty-first century by examining five templates of higher education, each of which conceptualises the role of the humanities in often contradictory ways. The central conundrum this chapter addresses is: *Can the height and heft they accord to the humanities be the principle pathfinder that helps decide which, if any, of these educational frameworks might emerge as* prima inter pares *in the future*? The question is discussed here with special reference to the role of the written word for, as Carlyle implies, 'the book' as a metaphor for open access to large repositories of knowledge is absolutely central to the idea of a modern university.

Extending Ranciere's arguments, I wish to argue that not only is there an obvious connection between the abstract noun 'ignorance' and the adjective 'ignorant' as these words apply to an individual or group of individuals but that both relate importantly to the agentive act of 'ignoring' on the parts of such individuals. What – and whom – we choose to ignore is, I suggest, a truer measure of our attitude toward education than what we do not know. The second lack can be remedied with infusions of knowledge; the first indicates a stance that is intrinsically hierarchical, snobbish and promotes inequity. That is why the apparently trivial case I am about to introduce

in this chapter of the near-exclusion of courses in 'creative writing' and even the fine arts in modern universities may turn out to provide some insights.

Courses that teach practical things like how to write, how to rhetorically persuade an audience of the "truth of our lies" in Picasso's memorable phrase, typically emphasize vague qualities such as empathy as an end-goal. A creative writer or artist tends to insist that the production of fictions offers a route to a 'true' understanding of human relations and mental states, including the emotional and somatic. Writers, moreover, adopt the methodology of mimicry; they imitate and imagine everyday life and the speech of ordinary mortals, rather than faithfully record these things as an anthropologist, psychologist or linguist might. Their metier is the language of feeling, not of thought. For all these reasons, it is not implausible to assume that creative writers deal in structures of ignorance rather than in 'true and certain' knowledge. But it is exactly this categorization that Ranciere perversely questions, arguing that the assumption of an equal ignorance on the part of the teacher and the taught is actually enabling when basic questions about, for example, meaning in human language or the nature of reality are being framed and contested. In such domains, one might add, there is simply so much we do not know, not even the most literate amongst us, that a trust in hand-me-down methodologies is indeed unwarranted.

The conventional argument, of course, is that fiction writers, poets and artists inhabit, by definition almost, a terrain that does not include the scholarly and self-reflexive; so, it makes good sense to keep them out of the 'ideal republic' of scholarship. In contrast, literary criticism as a form of theory is highly specialized with formal vocabularies, grammars, argumentative premises and descriptive apparatuses. Why then should it be so surprising that the scholarly activity of literary criticism is preferred and privileged over the teaching of the actual practice of writing poetry and fiction in a modern university? A graded hierarchy is thus, de facto, evident in most modern universities (except perhaps for those relatively rich 'liberal arts' colleges which cater to relatively small moneyed minorities the world over).

A related point concerned the exclusion of oral creativity from a modern university. It is undeniable, as Ranciere indicates, that illiterates, however skilled as rhetoricians, simply cannot enter a university's bounded space as teachers; they represent the 'most ignorant'. Writers and artists, on the whole, are also out; literary critics are in but are certainly not the top-of-the-pops by any means (see Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, 2008). Philosophers and historians only dot

university landscapes in small, beleaguered cliques; the social sciences do a bit better and the hard and engineering sciences are definitely in – but the real holders of academic power are the academic-bureaucrats, schooled in rule-book literacies (see Collini, who eloquently makes this point about the bureaucratisation of knowledge in western universities, British universities in particular, in his 2012 book, *What Are Universities For? A Contemporary Manifesto in Defence of our Universities*).

A preliminary puzzle, then: *How would Plato's Athenian Stranger and Ranciere's Joseph Jacotot assess this iniquitous situation, especially in countries like India, where a third of the population is still illiterate and about half of this very young nation still cannot dream of accessing a university education, let alone one which encourages the 'useless' discourses of the humanities?* These questions bring us directly to a central conundrum in Ranciere's text.

Does Illiteracy in Fact Equal Ignorance in the Contemporary Imaginary? Time to briefly introduce Joseph Jacotot, Ranciere's chosen hero, at this point. Who was this man? Kristin Ross, Ranciere's translator, tells us in her introduction that he was "a school teacher driven into exile during the Restoration who allowed that experience to ferment into a method for showing illiterate parents how they themselves could teach their children how to read". What Ranciere did, according to Ross, was to indirectly bring his biographical study of this obscure historical figure to bear on the post-1968 debates about the nature and quality of French education. Could, she asks, "these experiences 'communicate' with administrators face to face with the problems of educating immigrant North African children in Paris, or with intellectuals intent on mapping the French school system's continued reproduction of social inequalities"?

Ranciere answers these questions by tracing a triangular theoretical relationship between three concepts: inequality, ignorance and the arts. His tone and manner may be very different from Plato's Athenian Stranger but he, too, pleads powerfully for a world-view where 'the other' is not an epitome of ignorance but rather a source of new knowledge. Further the capacity to learn is conceived by Ranciere to be a 'convivial' one where assumptions of inequality must be jettisoned if severe 'stultification' is to be avoided.

Observation of how children learn language and other skills shows us that they do not differentiate between academic knowledge (learning to read, count, write essays, etc.), artistic immersion (drawing, singing) and practical skills (making a box, gardening); yet educational systems teach us, falsely, that some of these types of

knowledge 'really' belong to the realm of ignorance and are therefore low-status compared to the 'true knowledge' conferred by book-learning. Such a literacy versus illiteracy divide ends up creating, as Ranciere graphically puts it, a 'society of contempt' where people are shamed into believing that they are ignoramuses because they lack certain literacy-related skills and therefore deserve their low position in the social hierarchy. The fact they actually possess numerous and robust aesthetic skills is completely obscured in such an iniquitous reckoning.

Certainly, it seems undeniable that, to most of us, the idea of a university that freely admits grubby illiterates is, by now, almost inconceivable. A necessary condition for membership of a university community today is that one must, at the very least, be a reader, preferably with a long list of citations at her polished fingertips. To cite some indirect evidence from the colonial/postcolonial context, for example, we know that the word 'Reader' stands (or at least until very recently stood) for an actual teaching grade in our postcolonial institutions, indicating a position 'higher' than a 'Lecturer', who speaks, and 'lower' than a 'Professor', who professes a set of disciplinary beliefs and, possibly, allegiances. It is obvious that such a verbal hierarchy displays a clear modernist semantics where the idiom of discourse is immensely different from that of the ancient world. Nevertheless, there are continuities. This paper will try and track some of the hidden iniquities within these age-old continuities.

One implication of such long-standing linguistic preferences and differences for an assessment of the role of the humanities in our universities is obvious. The oral and practical modes of knowledge fore-grounded by both by Plato's 'Athenian Stranger' and Ranciere seem more than a little disenfranchised in contemporary university set-ups where productivity and promotions are judged mainly in terms of the books and articles a scholar produces. Quite apart from the thorny question of how and by whom critical judgments about the import of scholarly productions are made, my paper will argue that approaches to the written word that are organically linked to oral modes in their origins, such as courses in 'creative writing', for instance, which I shall take as a test case, tend to inhabit the margins of universities.

'Creative writing' courses in the literary arena are indeed suspect on many grounds, not least that they are a late American addition to university curricula that, arguably, seek to make capital gains out of community resources that should, in principle, be free. Further, they seem bent on breeding a wearisome sameness of taste amongst

readers, not to mention their encouragement of endless reams of self-indulgent confessional tales by various interest groups ranging from anti-abortionists to immigrants, from radical LGBT groups to apologists for 'family values' and the homey institution of marriage. Opponents argue that serious thinking on socially relevant subjects is driven out by such courses. However, if one were to put aside these quite justifiable suspicions for the moment and concentrate on the philosophical basis on which such courses should – or should not – find an equal place in university curricula, one might consider a different range of arguments.

It is my contention in this chapter that there is not just an economic but a cognitive logic to the hard choices that contemporary universities make when they set the sciences and professional courses 'above' the humanities as well as some forms of written text over others. Partially following Ranciere, such judgements seem to be based not on any attempts to imagine the myriad capabilities and skills a person might possess but on a fashioning of his or her putative 'ignorance'. By this argument, the daily workings of modern universities are as much fueled by the power of ignorance as by the norms of scholarship. As I interpret Ranciere, it is this subterranean, interdisciplinary 'civil war' that is being played out in the modern university without our even realizing it.

Through its reading of some of these putative tensions in present-day universities in the light of five distinct models of educational attainment, this chapter constitutes a preliminary attempt at articulating future intellectual challenges within the vaunted context of a 'pluralist' India where educational inequality and educational quality are inextricably bound, especially when it comes to conceptualizing 'the humanities'.

An auto-ethnographic background note: my ignorant Victorian education

> *Entire ignorance is not so terrible or extreme an evil, and is far from being the greatest of all; too much cleverness and too much learning, accompanied with ill bringing-up, are far more fatal.*
>
> —*Plato, 'Laws'*

> *A man can drive a herd of sheep. But for the herd PEOPLE, a herd called LEARNED SOCIETY, UNIVERSITY, COMMISSION, REVIEW, etc., was necessary – in short, stultification, the old rule of the social fiction . . . Thereafter, the dominant fiction and the daily*

stultification went in the same direction. There is a simple reason for this. Progress is the pedagogical fiction built into the fiction of the society as a whole. The century of Progress is that of the triumphant explicators, of humanity pedagogicized.

—Ranciere, 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster'

Personal confessions are, as a rule, discouraged in academic writing. Yet my subject here is literature and the normative exclusion of the practitioners of the literary arts from universities. Such practitioners, by and large, have no qualms at all about flaunting personal experience. On these rather flimsy grounds, I will therefore begin with an admission. I believe that my own university education might have been structured to produce exactly the sort of ignorance about how ignorance itself is conceptualized to which Plato and Ranciere point. After all, the university system I was part of belonged to the 'century of Progress' to which Ranciere alludes. India had been already 'decolonized' for two or three decades. Our university systems were now our own. Yet, it would be hard to contest the fact that English Literature and other humanities courses in our universities seemed to have remained 'stultified', somehow frozen in colonial time. My teachers were all uniformly wonderful and committed scholars and I owe much to them. They were by no means 'triumphant explicators'; however, our postcolonial stars at the time decreed that, as a community, we never attempted to make self-conscious theoretical connections between the great canonical fictions ranging from Shakespeare to Shaw that we studied in class and the larger social fictions to which we willy-nilly subscribed about the whys and wherefores of the construction of this canon in faraway, unknown lands (England, Europe, America).

In short, we were scholars; our "cleverness and learning", as Plato would have it, was not in doubt; earnest students of the Calcutta and Jadavpur Universities regularly won scholarships to pursue their doctoral studies at Oxbridge, as their teachers had done before them. Yet, I would want to argue that we were severely under-equipped with the self-reflexive tools that might have enabled us to gauge the vast, innocent depths of our ignorance. Our sense of agency was limited; we had no idea that we were quite entitled to hijack the canon, question it, tamper with it and infiltrate it with texts in other languages from our multicultural environment. English Literature existed in a pure unsullied domain, its texts sacred – and static.

It is true that an astonishing, unexpected and liberating sense of change did come about a decade later, towards the very end of the

1970s, redeeming this apparently timeless stultification. Edward Said, that is, published *Orientalism* in 1979 and Salman Rushdie published *Midnight's Children* in 1981. This pair of books, as I see it, marked a sea-change in the way the dominion of English Literature was perceived in postcolonial contexts. Departments of 'postcolonial studies' mushroomed everywhere and, slowly, over the next couple of decades, a certain – not always reliable! – vocabulary was forged that helped us confront some of our deep-seated pathologies. For example, I came to realize that I might actually have been educated in Victorian England, even though, by happenstance, my part of Victoria's 'imperishable empire' was located in the postcolonial Calcutta of mid-1970s! Anything that I have to say today on the subject of the humanities on university syllabi is thus irremediably coloured by what I was directed to think about 'English Literature' when I was at university all those centuries ago.

In the context of the present discussion on the role of the humanities in post-Independence Indian universities, two texts stand out from the University of Calcutta syllabus prescribed for us at the time. They were by Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) and John Henry, Cardinal Newman (1801–1890), both of whom wrote extensively on the idea of the university and the role of the writer.

Carlyle, in his usual emphatic style, was categorical about the 'new hero' who was to animate the university scene of his time. This 'hero', Carlyle pointed out, was less than a century old and he was that exciting new-age man: 'The Writer'. According to Carlyle, the-writer-as-hero, had come into his own in the age of print and by Carlyle's time was powerful enough to commandeer his very own university. Why? Well, a writer could, Carlyle argued, now go *directly* to his readers without an intermediate system of interpreters and guides. As a consequence, Carlyle was able to pronounce with admirable confidence in 1840: "The true University of these days is a collection of books" (Carlyle 1840: 192), anticipating in some ways the extravagant claims made for the Internet as the true University of *our* times (Model III) of this chapter, where 'heroes' such as, for example, Michael Sandel and Malcolm Gladwell abound.

Could Indian universities do more to create 'virtual heroes' today who would pioneer a vigorous intellectual vision for a twenty-first-century future? I merely raise the question here. For the moment, let me just say that I believe we still have much to learn from Carlyle's enthusiasm in this respect – for, observe the men he chose as the centres of his 'new universities'. They were, to wit, a dictionary-maker, a social and a moral philosopher who not only pioneered the theory of

the 'social contract' but whose theories are held to have influenced the French Revolution. Most surprisingly, Carlyle held up Robert Burns, a peasant poet, a farm labourer without a university education who was also the beloved national bard of a potentially rebellious Scotland, as an iconic 'Man of Letters'.

Newman, Carlyle's slightly younger contemporary, was more circumspect. He saw the university as essentially a place where knowledge was transmitted and *not* a centre either for research or ethical disputation.

> The view taken of a University in these Discourses is the following: That it is a place of teaching universal knowledge. This implies that its object is, on the one hand, intellectual, not moral; and, on the other, that it is the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than the advancement. If its object were scientific and philosophical discovery, I do not see why a University should have students; if religious training, I do not see how it can be the seat of literature and science.
>
> (John Henry Newman 2001, *The Idea of a University*)

Looking more closely at the ideologies projected by Carlyle and Newman, we find that they held very different positions on what 'learning' might be. Carlyle was energetically hopeful that the writer would find his rightful place within the university systems of his time. The writer as hero would not accept the dicta, in Ranciere's words, "of a herd called LEARNED SOCIETY, UNIVERSITY, COMMISSION, REVIEW, etc." His poetry and prose would, in fact, constitute a revolutionary bulwark against 'stultification'. Cardinal Newman, on the other hand, pitched (despite his suggestive surname) for the idea of a university whose duty it was simply to pass on 'universal knowledge' and not engage in moral wrangling or research initiatives. In Ranciere's classification, Newman's vision, then, was of "humanity pedagogicized". Now my recounting this 'unauthorized' – and definitely 'outdated' personal background seems to me to give rise to a couple of general, basic, questions which I will try and pursue in the next sections of this chapter.

Question 1: Pace Carlyle, can the 'man of letters' in any way, be a hero today?

Can s/he galvanize the University? How, when, where, why? Could Indian universities do more to create 'virtual heroes' today who would pioneer a vigorous intellectual vision for a twenty-first-century future?

Question 2: Pace Newman, can 'teaching universal knowledge' really be at the centre of a university's activities today? If so, how is such universality defined? Should research be separated from a university's key activities? Should learning to read and write, let's say, something as useless as poetry, contribute to a more 'convivial' notion of 'universal knowledge'?

We shall now examine five models of the university – Present/Future/Past/Indian/Western – to try and approach the questions provoked by Carlyle and Newman more than a century ago – but which are as urgently relevant today.

MODEL 0.0. 'Battlefield and tribunal': the standard-issue contemporary university

> *Athenian Stranger: And should each man conceive himself to be his own enemy: what shall we say?*
>
> *Cleinias the Cretan: . . . [There is a victory and defeat-the first and best of victories, the lowest and worst of defeats – which each man gains or sustains at the hands, not of another, but of himself; this shows that there is a war against ourselves going on within every one of us].*
>
> *Athenian Stranger: . . . [What men in general term peace is only a name . . . all institutions, private as well as public, [are] arranged . . . with a view to war.]*
>
> —*Plato, 'Laws'*

> *War is the law of the social order. But by the term 'war', let us not think here of any fatal clash of material forces, any unleashing of hordes dominated by bestial instincts. War, like all human works, is first an act of words . . . Social irrationality is war in its two aspects: the battlefield and the tribunal. The battlefield is the true portrait of society.*
>
> —*Ranciere, 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster'*

Our first model of the contemporary university is a professional 'meat-grinder' model producing/reproducing knowledge and/or skills ad infinitum. A teaching shop/ship that trades in degrees/identity tags (historian, sociologist, literary critic, biologist, etc.), this kind of university can, in theory, accommodate the whole human community. However, by the same token, in following the normative social laws of human societies, it can also be coercive and reductive in its institutional modes, memorably described by Michel Foucault as 'discipline and punish'. Thus the standard-issue university has

a dual character, fostering a civil or social 'war' within, manifesting both as battlefield and tribunal, as Plato and Ranciere warned. Such a model of the university may comprise, as the *Shorter Oxford* benignly informs us:

> the whole entire number, a community regarded collectively . . . the whole body of teachers engaged at a particular place, in giving and receiving instruction in the higher branches of learning.
>
> (First usage in English, in 1300, used to describe St. Edmund's in 'Oxenford'. (*Shorter Oxford Dictionary*)

But the standard model of the University also consists in an 'inhuman' apparatus of rules, regulations, failings. Precisely because it aims to be wholly 'inclusive', it ends up being 'exclusive' and persistently engaged in the meta-task of creating 'fair' and thus ever more bureaucratic, rules of exclusion. And of course, we see this paradox of 'judging by marks' being played out in Indian universities right before our eyes today. So this dilemma of the meat-grinder or cookie-cutter university is not so far from Lyotard's dire view that:

> All education is inhuman because it does not happen without constraint or terror; and conversely . . . indetermination is so threatening (to the instituted) that the reasonable mind cannot fail to fear in it . . . But the stress placed on the conflict of the inhumanities is legitimated, nowadays more than previously, by the fact of a transformation of the nature of the system which I believe is a profound one . . . The term 'postmodern' has been used . . . to designate something of this transformation.
>
> (Jean-François Lyotard 1991, *The Inhuman*)

Question 3: How can the humanities find a natural home within an 'inhuman' system? Is this not a contradiction in terms? And to pursue the emblematic 'defense of poesy' within the university, even if the study of poetry is in fact legally permitted within the 'standard issue' university, would not the teaching of 'poetry as practice' still be preferentially excluded within such a model, because as Plato insisted long ago, there is in fact a natural enmity between theorizing 'philosophers', including literary critics and the unruly tribe of writers? Honestly speaking, would academics not prefer their writers dead so that these 'specimens' under the microscope may be better and more fearlessly analyzed?

Short Answer: The Standard Model seems to suggest that something like 'poetry as practice' should *not* be taught at university because letting creative writers into what is, by tradition, philosophers' or critics' territory, is really is a bit like letting a band of mongooses into a snake-pit (or some such uncomplimentary post-Platonic analogy). We may expect mayhem! But the solution found to this 'naturally in a state of war' problem by the American universities which have pioneered the concept of 'creative writing courses' – namely, that of keeping the two activities strictly separate – seems to me unsatisfactory. This is because such a 'hygienic' solution destroys the fundamental raison d'être for inducting creative writing of the sort Carlyle would have endorsed into universities in the first place – namely, to encourage interdisciplinary crosstalk and cross-fertilization and foster the convivial ideal of 'universal' knowledge. Instead, this model of the university becomes mired in absurdity since it must choose the bureaucratic route towards inclusion, as the writer and scholar Umberto Eco has sarcastically pointed out:

'All right, gentlemen,' I said. 'I give up. What are you two talking about?'

'Well, Diotallevi and I are planning a reform in higher education. A School of Comparative Irrelevance, where useless or impossible courses are given. The school's aim is to turn out scholars capable of endlessly increasing the number of unnecessary subjects.'

'And how many departments are there?'

'Four so far, but that may be enough for the whole syllabus. The Tetrapyloctomy Department has a preparatory function; its purpose is to inculcate a sense of irrelevance. Another important department is Adynata or Impossibilia. Like Urban Planning for Gypsies. The essence of the discipline is the comprehension of the underlying reason for a thing's absurdity'.

'We have courses in Morse syntax, the history of Antarctic agriculture, the history of Easter Island painting, contemporary Sumerian literature, Montessori grading, Assyrio-Babylonian philately, the technology of the wheel in pre-Columbian empires, and the phonetics of the silent film.' Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum*

Eco's method of irreverence here suggests an irresistible addition to the set of tools for the analysis of the relation of ignorance to knowledge in higher education that Plato and Ranciere offer us, and I have decided to include it in my none-too-serious presentation of

the 'five models' I delineate in this chapter. Consider, then, an imaginary 'out-of-the-question' question paper at the 'Standard University' described above, whose exclusionary criteria, as mentioned, tend to privilege philosophy over poetry, marks over looser criteria of 'merit' or 'virtue', theory over practice and the written over the oral.

COURSE: CREATIVE WRITING 101: ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. THERE ARE NO CHOICES. YOU ARE FORBIDDEN TO SPEAK DURING THE EXAMINATION. IF YOU COULD REFRAIN FROM SPEAKING ALTOGETHER AT ALL TIMES, THAT WOULD BE EVEN MORE CREDITABLE.

PLEASE DO NOT CHEAT OR CHOKE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES AS THESE CONSTITUTE FORMS OF IMPROPER CONDUCT THAT THE UNIVERSITY UNRESERVEDLY CONDEMNS.

NOTE: MARKS WILL BE DEDUCTED FOR TWITTERING AND FOR DISSING YOUR INSTRUCTOR UNDER YOUR BREATH. THE STUDENT IS ALSO REMINDED THAT *IMAGINING* THINGS IS CONSIDERED A SERIOUS OFFENCE WHICH MAY INVITE SUMMARY EXPULSION.

TIME: 5 MINUTES MARKS: 100 (BUT DO NOT EXPECT MORE THAN 2) INSTRUCTION:

Meditate silently on the following:

"The unexamined life is not worth living" Socrates, circa fifth century BCE.

"The writer's job is to provoke the imagination" Salman Rushdie, twenty-first century.

THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Qi. Why should creative writing be taught in universities?

Qii. What sense of 'the collective', if at all, does it create among writers?

Qiii. Where else, if at all, could or does this community thrive?

Q iv. Why do some cultures teach creative writing while others do not?

IMP NOTE:

DO NOT WHINE! 5 MIN IS LOADS OF TIME WHEN YOU DO NOT HAVE MUCH TO SAY.

NEXT!

MODEL 0.1. 'The positivity of doing': the institute

Athenian Stranger: Well, then, if I tell you what are my notions of education, will you consider whether they satisfy you?

Cleinias the Cretan: Let us hear.

Athenian Stranger: According to my view, anyone who would be good at anything must practise that thing from his youth upwards, both in sport and earnest, in its several branches: for example, he who is to be a good builder, should play at building children's houses; he who is to be a good husbandman, at tilling the ground; and those who have the care of their education should provide them when young with mimic tools. . . . The most important part of education is right training in the nursery. The soul of the child in his play should be guided to the love of that sort of excellence in which when he grows up to manhood he will have to be perfected. Do you agree with me thus far?

Cleinias the Cretan: Certainly.

Athenian Stranger: Then let us not leave the meaning of education ambiguous or ill-defined. At present, when we speak in terms of praise or blame about the bringing-up of each person, we call one man educated and another uneducated, although the uneducated man may be sometimes very well educated for the calling of a retail trader, or of a captain of a ship, and the like. For we are not speaking of education in this narrower sense, but of that other education in virtue from youth upwards, which makes a man eagerly pursue the ideal perfection of citizenship, and teaches him how rightly to rule and how to obey. This is the only education which, upon our view, deserves the name; that other sort of training, which aims at the acquisition of wealth or bodily strength, or mere cleverness apart from intelligence and justice, is mean and illiberal, and is not worthy to be called education at all . . .

Clenias the Cretan: Very true; and we entirely agree with you.

—*Plato, 'Laws'*

I took the great gauchiste theme – the relations of intellectual and manual work – and put it inreverse: not the re-education of intellectuals, but the eruption of negativity, of thinking, into a social category always defined by the positivity of doing.

—*Ranciere, 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster'*

We come now to a model of learning that is in fact devoted to practical learning. Such an institution is exemplified by a 'meritocratic' system like the IIT where I teach; here, students with an aptitude for or training in, scientific and technological subjects are admitted on the basis of a very tough exam. Turning first to etymology, the noun 'institute',

as opposed to 'university' derives from the Latin verb for 'to establish' and has a relatively modern as well as a more instrumental and regulative sense. The dictionary tells us that it is related to the words: *canon, decree, edict, law, ordinance, precept, prescription, rule,* etc. Most evident in this model of the University is an 'instrumentalist', goal-oriented approach to education and an emphasis on specialization' or 'expert' knowledge (see Kripke 1980).

> A society or organization instituted to promote some literary, scientific, artistic or educational object; also the building in which the work of the society is to be carried out. Mostly with qualifying epithet or as the designation of some particular society or class of societies, as *Literary, Philosophical or Mechanics Institute.* First usage 1795, in post-Revolutionary France, when the old academy was replaced by the new *Institute National des Sciences et des Arts.*
>
> (*The Shorter Oxford Dictionary*)

Amongst modern thinkers, Martin Heidegger develops this conceptualization of the 'technical space' very interestingly and his somewhat enigmatic thoughts could have a crucial bearing on the moot question of technology as a 'humanizing' force in the production of knowledge. Here a glimpse from him in the form of a brief quotation:

> Technology itself is a contrivance – in Latin, an *instrumentum.* The current conception of technology, according to which it is a means and a human activity, can therefore be called the instrumental and anthropological definition of technology. Who would deny that it is correct? But . . . technology is no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing . . . of truth. Because the essence of technology is nothing technological . . . decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. Such a realm is art . . . *The more questioningly we ponder the essence of technology, the more mysterious the essence of art becomes* (emphasis mine).
>
> (Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology')

The founder of the IITs, Jawaharlal Nehru, had not, as far as I can discover, read Heidegger, but he was concerned in his way with 'humanizing', if not technology, then at least, technologists. That is why he insisted that humanities courses be introduced in the IITs from the

very inception of these institutions in the 1950s, soon after independence. According to the Charter of the IITs, they were set up with two broad objectives:

1 the advancement of knowledge through education and research, in both Pure and Applied Science, in Engineering, Social Science and Humanities;
2 service to the community and nation (which we refer to as Extension activity) through the use of their resources both intellectual and material.

Here are some of Nehru's thoughts on a subject he worried ceaselessly about, which he referred to as an 'Imaginative Approach to Engineering Activity'.

> I know you can measure with your techniques and rules the hardness and strength of this metal or that, of stone and iron and whatnot . . . How do you measure the strength of an individual? The human being as material is not only a difficult material but an exciting material because it is a live material, a growing material, a changing and dynamic thing. No two persons are alike and we have to build with that material . . . [and] function in the environment of India with the material of India . . .
>
> The Engineering approach to problems would be the scientific approach coupled with the urge for creation, the urge to make and produce new things for the common good. The main thing is the growth of the individual, the group, the human being cannot be imposed on him. A human being grows, well, ought grow, like a plant. But it has to grow by itself; you cannot make it grow by imposition . . .
>
> A static mind thinks it is by decrees that things are done, while really you have to carry the human mind with you and prepare the ground for its growth . . . It is important that . . . engineers advance to become better men and women.
>
> (Jawaharlal Nehru Selected Speeches)

The Institute, a concept that was crystallised in the wake of the French Revolution, set itself up against the old Academy and stressed practical and focussed knowledge. At its core, then, it cannot but be exclusive – and exclusionary. How can a specialist institute of this nature make a place for the arts and creative writing?

Short Answer: Paradoxically, it can. First, because if one agrees with Heidegger, then technology with its practical emphasis on material

creation can lead us a 'truer' understanding of the arts, crafts and the processes of making or 'creativity'. Second, there is nothing in the definition of an 'institute' that prevents it being exclusively devoted, not to engineering, say, but to a particular art or craft such as painting or toy-manufacturing or textile-making. Third, anticipating, that such institutes could become too narrow in their conception of 'virtue', a structural component of education oriented, for instance, to turning technologists into 'better men and women' can be built into the institute system. This is what Nehru did in the case of the IITs, decreeing that a certain number of such courses would be mandatory and carry the same number credits as any engineering or science courses. To this 'equalising' move by fiat, both Plato and Aristotle might have given it their qualified approval.

Question 4: Pace Heidegger, how exactly is technology a way of divining the 'essential truth' especially about the arts and humanities, as Heidegger claims? In what ways does this 'instrumentum' contribute to 'universal knowledge'?

Question 5: Pace Nehru, how does one persuade dyed-in-the-wool practitioners in 'applied' areas such as engineers or weavers to engage with the vague and philosophical questions of value and virtue with which the humanities struggle?

MODEL 0.2. 'A community of equals': the rights-based university

> *Athenian Stranger. Then, if such be our principles, we must assert that imitation is not to be judged of by pleasure and false opinion; and this is true of all equality, for the equal is not equal or the symmetrical, symmetrical because somebody thinks or likes something, but they are to be judged of by the standard of truth, and by no other whatever . . . Dear companions, if this our divine assembly can only be established . . . the state will be perfected and become a waking reality, which a little while ago we attempted to create as a dream and in idea only, mingling together reason and mind in one image, in the hope that our citizens might be duly mingled and rightly educated; and being educated, and dwelling in the citadel of the land, might become perfect guardians, such as we have never seen in all our previous life, by reason of the saving virtue which is in them.*
>
> —*Plato, 'Laws'*

The Community of Equals: We can thus dream of a society of the emancipated that would be a society of artists. Such a society would

repudiate the division between those who know and those who don't, between those who possess or don't possess the property of intelligence. It would only know minds in action: people who do, who speak about what they are doing, and who thus transform all their works into ways of demonstrating the humanity that is in them as in everyone.

—*Ranciere, 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster'*

Another quite different idea of a university based on exclusion but *not* on expertise and aligned to different social ideals is the idea of a university that admits only those who face rampant social discrimination – for example, women on the Indian subcontinent. Such a university I'd call a 'rights-based' university, and I will here focus on an actual example. This is the case of the Asian University for Women (AUW) located in Chittagong, Bangladesh, which I was personally quite involved with when it was set up in the early 2000s.

Here, I'd argue that the *placement* of such a university, its cultural location, matters a great deal. And this is where the idea of an 'Asian' university comes in. Had the university in question been located, let's say, in Belgium or the Bahamas, rather than in Bangladesh, much of its orientation towards the business of 'giving and receiving' knowledge would surely have been very different. The social networks, issues of livelihood, upbringing, religion, dress and language that are so particular to the region make it, for example, completely reasonable to insist that 25 percent of AUW's student population be drawn from those with disadvantaged backgrounds within Bangladesh and also that a substantial segment of its student population come from countries like Afghanistan and Vietnam. But this would certainly *not* be the case if this university were located, say, in Connecticut instead of Chittagong. Indeed, it is in this sense that the AUW differs radically from the small liberal arts colleges for women such as Vassar and Smith that have long flourished in America and have traditionally draw their student population from a homogenous, upper-class WASP cohort, even though it may partly draw its inspiration from them. Today, in an age of much vaunted globalisation perhaps one of the most important aspects of any 'new' university that is being set up would have to be its multicultural diversity and its socio-economic reach – and it follows that South Asia, with its rooted traditions of pluralism is therefore in many ways an ideal location for a such a university which aims to be as inclusive as possible – economically, culturally and imaginatively.

Such a set-up, however, presents us with the opposite problem from Model 0.0 which has to develop criteria of how to exclude students

precisely because it claimed 'universality'. How, one might ask, can a university which caters only to women lay claim *to being founded on principles of inclusion? Is not a contradiction to be identified here?*

Well, as I see, this particular criticism seems to rest on the misconception that gender is a confining or niche category. It is in fact the opposite: a liberating category, for *the question of women's rights is, in the end, a question of everybody's rights*. It is, in my view, just as absurd to contend that issues relating to a women's university are relevant only to women as to maintain that what happens at Delhi University is only relevant to the inhabitants of Delhi! So when we speak of women's empowerment and a 'rights-based' approach, it is important to reiterate that we are ultimately talking about empowering the society as a whole, about a universal vision of how equal things could be – which, of course, brings us right back to the idea of the university as a holistic and 'safe' environment.

It is indeed here that the famous argument made by Virginia Woolf that a woman needs 'a room of her own' if she is to be a writer on par with other male writers, remains as relevant today as when it was first made more than 75 years ago. The idea of a women's university can be seen as a macrocosm, a huge enlargement, of the ideal room Virginia Woolf once imagined. That is, it affords women a much-needed space where the iniquities and oppressions and, above all, the exclusions, of the real world are not replicated, as they would be in a more conventional university. Since this is a space 'reserved' for them, women entering it can go about imagining and conceptualizing a different, less patriarchal world, a world where they are less invisible that they have been for ages. A quotation from Woolf: "Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the power of reflecting men at twice their natural size".

Once, women 'owned' the space to be agents and actors themselves, it was Woolf's hope that there would be less distortions and inequalities reflected in the looking-glasses of education, books and ideology. Nor was this by any means a thought confined to Woolf's 'western' world alone; for one of her near contemporaries in India, Shakuntala Devi from Orissa, said much the same thing around the same time as Woolf was writing (1920/30): "Sisters, men by treating us as innocent, helpless simpletons have weakened us. We have forgotten our own ideals, and by posing as passive and ideal, we have done harm to our own cause".

More recently, in her 2006 inaugural address to the Frankfurt Book Fair, Mahasweta Devi, expressed similar sentiments regarding enforced passivity when she bravely declared that "the first fundamental right is

the right to dream". And of course, it is this right that has seldom been granted to women, from which they have been excluded so utterly that they often end up *dreaming other people's dreams and passively and invisibly living the lives that others have imagined for them.* In short, the lesson we learn from doyens like Virginia Woolf, Shakuntala Devi and Mahasweta Devi, is that one of the great intellectual undertakings of the universities of the future, and especially initiatives like the AUW, would be to interpret and define this political 'right to dream' – philosophically, socially and legally – thus becoming a possible epicentre of change.

The statistics with regard to gender in South Asia, after all, are not dream-like at all. They are nightmarish. There are less than 900 women to 1000 men on the subcontinent and this sex-ratio gap is increasing every day as new technological methods like amniocentesis as a 'sex determination' tool are added to the old methods of female infanticide and systematic malnutrition. In two of the most populous countries of the region, China and India, set to become the economic giants of the twenty-first century, son-preference remains an evident and shameful reality. You have only to walk down a street in Beijing or Delhi or Dhaka to see this for yourself. Women across the region are paid a third less than men for exactly the same job. In all of Asia, only 7 percent women occupy positions of leadership in parliament. There is still only 13 percent enrolment in technical education overall in South Asia. And so on and so on. Thus, while women may hold up half the sky, as Mao Tse Tung once declared, they certainly aren't getting much credit for doing so!

The uniqueness of a 'rights-based' model of the university like the AUW is that, by making women's education its one-point agenda, it will in fact be reaching out to half the world's population and rendering it, by degrees, visible. This is no mean task, nor should one take lightly any educational initiative that wears its intentions on its sleeve so honestly. Such a model of a university, if it succeeds, against great odds, might end up affirming the words of the world's most famous woman scientist, Marie Curie: "Nothing in the world is to be feared. Everything is to be understood". So, would this sort of 'rights-based' university actively run courses in creative writing and the arts?

Short Answer: Yes, most definitely, provided the women at the university *wanted* such courses. Going by Marie Curie's words, such a university could include absolutely everything of interest to its particular constituency – the whole universe of learning, including science, mathematics, hockey, chess, media arts, popular culture studies – but *they* would be making the choices. An example: there is a crafts-figure of a 'girl reading', forged by Dhokra metal workers, which has popped

up everywhere in India over the last decade. How would this artifact be interpreted by women? Does it present a woman as a passive recipient of received wisdom or a scholar? A rights-based university, which made room for women and women alone, would not, it is my submission, consider such questions trivial.

Question 6. Yet, there's no denying that such an idea, such a very cloistered ideal, smacks of ghettoization; it seems to repeat and reinforce the structures of patriarchy. In many respects, it is therefore bound at first to strike one as alarmingly retrograde. The concept seems to hark back to an era where the exclusion of women from the intellectual mainstream was the norm and where women's education, if it was given any serious thought at all, was confined either to the protectorate of the home or remained the preserve of convent-like institutions. Certain subjects alone were deemed suitable for women to study such as 'home science'. Do we really want to return to these bygone scenarios of seclusion when we attempt to imagine the future of learning?

MODEL 0.3. 'Education gives victory': the internet or virtual university

> *If you mean to ask what great good accrues to the state from the right training of a single youth, or of a single chorus-when the question is put in that form, we cannot deny that the good is not very great in any particular instance. But if you ask what is the good of education in general, the answer is easy-that education makes good men, and that good men act nobly, and conquer their enemies in battle, because they are good. Education certainly gives victory, although victory sometimes produces forgetfulness of education . . . and many a victory has been and will be suicidal to the victors; but education is never suicidal.*
>
> —*Plato, 'Laws'*

> *The madman – the Founder, as his followers called him – comes on stage with his Telemaque, a book, a thing. Take it and read it, he says to the poor person. I don't know how to read, answers the poor person. How would I understand what is written in the book? As you have understood all things up until now.*
>
> *Ranciere, 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster'*

Speaking of the future of learning, the new model of the 'Internet University', seems to bear a family resemblance to Carlyle's original notion of the university as a 'collection of books' which produces new-age 'heroes'.

This model of the university, like Carlyle's, is technologically underpinned. It emphasizes the high-speed transmission of information and de-emphasizes 'knowledge'. It is the terrain of 'heroes' and not 'gurus' and is thus likely, in the long run, to generate new models of 'leadership' and 'community'. Once again, going back to literary creativity as a test case for the inclusion of the humanities, this notion of the University is likely to invent and extend new forms of 'dialogical' communication.

Unlike the 'pure' literary genres of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the emergent clusters of inter-subjective genres characteristic of new forms of self-representation as various countries 'transform' themselves in the era of globalization, are obviously more oriented towards visual cueing, orality and conversational interaction and all tend to have a dialogic rather than a monologic bias. These forms include:

1 the revival of the 'epistolary form' as email interaction
2 the rise of instant *messaging systems* and a myriad *chat-rooms* tantalizingly poised between writing and speech and – in India – between the twin tongues of English and Hindi/Bangla/Tamil, etc. (resulting in a very vital spread of conversational discourses into *e-space*)
3 the short '140 character' forms of *Twitter* and *SMS*
4 experiments in *'interactive' writing and video games*, where readers can influence the shape of a text as it is being made; and simple automated 'story-generators'
5 *blogs, SMS and graphic novels* fluidly mixing story and text, often in more than one language
6 revised *'bulleted' forms of the interview, book-extract and essay* as tools for intellectual/commercial visibility
7 *video-conferencing* and *e-classrooms*, etc.
8 *MOOCS* (a politically incorrect saying: these days, some turn towards MECCA and some towards MOOCA!)

What e-modes like these do is to demonstrate the flexibility with which contemporary education can be collaboratively redesigned so that the old idea of the 'university' as a world-space for the free, sceptical and essentially non-instrumentalist discussion of ideas gets a new lease of life – and the 'creative writer' as a twenty-first-century 'hero' a la Carlyle could have a significant part to play in this process of technology-driven generic and generational transformation. In my view, one good measure of the success both of intellectual paradigm shifts and of technological revolutions is their capacity to foster new discourse and education genres.

Question 7: Just as the rise of the printing press once resulted in the rise of new genres like the novel as well as the rise of a new reading public and the 'writer as hero', will computer technologies similarly generate twenty-first-century textual styles with radical epistemological consequences?

These questions about how new modes of communication and literary/literacy formats might emerge from the technological conditions of today – where a techie from Bangalore or a blogger from Tehran can establish a considerable 'global' presence even though, s/he belongs to the 'developing' world – could provoke further additions to the ludic 'Question Paper' outlined in MODEL 0.0. For example:

Question 8. If Anna Karenina had had a cell-phone, would Tolstoy's novel really have been 800 pages long?

Question 9. How might Mahatma Gandhi's Hind Swaraj, *with its very strong anti-technological bias, be promoted on television, by SMS, etc., as a 'must read' book by media gurus today?*

Would the 'Internet University' with all multi-modal devices comfortably accommodate poetic and creative forms of expression?

Short Answer: The point has often been made that the universe of the Internet is recreating every aspect of our physical world in 'virtual' space, giving us a chance to imaginatively reconceptualise all our experience in an on-screen world. At the same time, this is an emergent, evolving, space whose possibilities remain largely uncharted and whose controlling deities like Microsoft and Google, not to mention powerful state-apparatuses, are shadowy. However, on the basis of naive observation, it does appear that the 'Internet' university would, by default, allow 'free' access to, and even perhaps enormously extend our notions of, the realm of poetic and creative expression across cultures and languages.

MODEL 0.4. 'The spirit of the poet': Vishwabharati at Shantiniketan (or 'the world university' as an 'abode of peace')

> *But the truth is, that there neither is, nor has been, nor ever will be, either amusement or instruction in any degree worth, speaking of in war, which is nevertheless deemed by us to be the most serious of our pursuits. And therefore, as we say, every one of us should live the life of peace as long and as well as he can. And what is the right way of*

living? Are we to live in sports always? If so, in what kind of sports? We ought to live sacrificing, and singing, and dancing, and then a man will be able to propitiate the Gods, and to defend himself against his enemies and conquer them in battle. The type of song or dance by which he will propitiate them has been described, and the paths along which he is to proceed have been cut for him. He will go forward in the spirit of the poet.

—*Plato, 'Laws'*

The poem, in a sense, is always the absence of another poem . . . One must learn near those who have worked in the gap between feeling and expression, between the silent language of emotion and the arbitrariness of the spoken tongue, near those who have tried to give voice to the silent dialogue the soul has with itself, who have gambled all their credibility on the bet of the similarity of minds.

Ranciere, 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster'

This is the only extant university established by a Nobel Prize-winning poet, Rabindranath Tagore who, as it happens, had little, if any formal schooling – and it is undoubtedly a remarkable attempt to found an original 'alternative university'. This university emphasized cultural roots but was at the same time decidedly internationalist in its orientation and extremely encouraging of 'Science/Arts' crossovers. Some quotations from Tagore:

> I was brought up in an atmosphere of aspiration, aspiration for the expansion of the human spirit. We in our home sought freedom of power in our language, freedom of imagination in our literature, freedom of soul in our religious creeds and that of mind in our social environment. Such an opportunity has given me confidence in the power of education which is one with life and only which can give us real freedom, the highest that is claimed for man, his freedom of moral communion in the human world . . . I try to assert in my words and works that education has its only meaning and object in freedom – freedom from ignorance about the laws of the universe, and freedom from passion and prejudice in our communication with the human world. In my institution I have attempted to create an atmosphere of naturalness in our relationship with strangers, and the spirit of hospitality which is the first virtue in men that made civilization possible.
>
> (Rabindranath Tagore 1929, "Ideals of Education", *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*)

> We have come to this world to accept it, not merely to know it. We may become powerful by knowledge, but we attain fullness by sympathy. The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. But we find that this education of sympathy is not only systematically ignored in schools, but it is severely repressed. From our very childhood habits are formed and knowledge is imparted in such a manner that our life is weaned away from nature and our mind and the world are set in opposition from the beginning of our days. Thus the greatest of educations for which we came prepared is neglected, and we are made to lose our world to find a bagful of information instead. We rob the child of his earth to teach him geography, of language to teach him grammar. Child-nature protests against such calamity with all its power of suffering, subdued at last into silence by punishment.
>
> (Rabindranath Tagore 1917, *Personality*)

Do Tagore's views on education indicate that he would welcome creative writing, poetry and the arts in his ideal university?

Short Answer: The answer here seems, for once, to be a resounding 'yes'. It is a matter of record that he went to great lengths to place the creative arts centre-stage in his 'alternative' university, Shantiniketan. His views also seem to resonate well with Ranciere's ideas about the energetic and unembarrassed ignorance of the child as a model for learning. Ranciere asserts that: "According to the unequal returns of various intellectual apprenticeships, what all human children learn best is what no master can explain: the mother tongue . . . they are almost all – regardless of gender, social condition, and skin color – able to understand and speak the language of their parents". In several of his writings, Tagore, too, focuses on the child as the ideal learner with imaginative resources routinely stultified by the rote learning of school geographies and histories.

At the same time, issues remain. The opposition Tagore sets up in these passages between imaginative freedom and subjugation of the spirit by 'silence into punishment' may anachronistically recall Lyotard in Model 0.0 but it also appears to be at odds with the notion of the university as a place for sceptical expression, a function underlined by all western thinkers, including Plato and Ranciere. Rather, for Tagore, the university is a place where *empathy* is nurtured and where 'harmony with all existence' is encouraged. This is a distinctive cultural difference between Tagore's 'Eastern' yet internationalist idea

of the university and the 'Western' idea, also internationalist, where *questioning* (see Heidegger in Model 0.1) is paramount.

Question 10: But does Tagore's Shatiniketan sound like a fantasy holiday in the wilderness – a green peace resort, a nostalgic environmentalist retreat, rather than a university? Is it out of touch with our frenetic times – too good to be true and/or too true to be good? How do we revive, should we choose to, this possibly 'outdated' ideal of the university where artistic freedom and being at one with nature is highly prized?

MODEL 0.5. 'Wonder not, O Stranger': the travelling university

> *The Athenian Stranger: When a stranger expresses wonder at the singularity of what he sees, any inhabitant will naturally answer him: Wonder not, O stranger; this is our custom, and you may very likely have some other custom about the same things.*
>
> —*Plato, 'Laws'*

> *The artist's emancipatory lesson, opposed on every count to the professor's stultifying lesson, is this: each one of us is an artist to the extent that he carries out a double process; he is not content to be a mere journeyman but wants to make all work a means of expression, and he is not content to feel something but tries to impart it to others. The artist needs equality as the explicator needs inequality. And he therefore designs the model of a reasonable society where the very thing that is outside of reason – matter, linguistic signs – is traversed by reasonable will: that of telling the story and making others feel the ways in which we are similar to them.*
>
> *Ranciere, 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster'*

This peripatetic model of the university was associated not so much with Plato as with Aristotle in fourth-century Athens, who travelled out to other places to deliver what one supposes might have been the ancient equivalent of the name-lecture, followed by a seminar. A similar peripatetic disposition was also attributed to the *parivrajaka* or 'travelling scholar' in the Indian tradition. In this older – and doubtless romanticised – picture of learning, the dust never, as it were, settles. The travelling guru gathers students about him, loses some, picks up others, stops for a while in a forest clearing or a strange village

and then moves on. Learning is thus not confined within stone, red-brick or concrete; or even to the Occident or the Orient. Intellectual alliances are temporary and negotiable, and there is always the freedom to change one's position, one's location, while at the same time including the whole universe within the scope of one's textual practice. The Indo-European prefix *pari* or *para* (meaning 'beyond') in Sanskrit words like *paribhasha* ('criticism') is of interest here. *Paribhasha* literally means 'beyond language' and specifically refers to the self-reflexive, meta-discursive dimensions of language. Language, in this model of the university, has paradoxically to move 'beyond itself' in order to find additional resources with which to critically analyse its own structure and system.

This model of the university appears to be both pre-modern and post-modern in its perspective. It seems to have made something of a comeback in these days of hectic conference-shuttling across the globe. In conjunction with e-mail, Facebook and other modes of keeping in touch and finding teachers and students in strange, new locales, this remains an exciting model of the university where everyone is, in effect, conceptualized as a traveller, a scholar gypsy, free to travel across disciplines, cultures and the internet in search of knowledge. 'Interdisciplinary' conversations and the impulse towards 'wonder' seem intrinsic to this 'hybrid' model for humanities education today.

Perhaps there is, however, a cautionary note to be added with regard to the undoubted charms of the 'travelling' university. It is that such free-wheeling disciplinary wanderings require a commitment not to mere dalliance but to search and research beyond the doctrinaire limits of one's 'own' disciplines; dynamic alliances with other disciplines and cultures seem in order if a rediscovery of one's own motivations is truly sought. Otherwise, as Ranciere might have pointed out, one simply risks delivering the 'same' lecture to different audiences and this would constitute, in his book, the unequal explicator's paradox at its most ironic. That is, this would involve an actually 'static' situation that simply had the appearance of change; superior academics would be whizzing off to different locations, no doubt, usually in a unidirectional fashion from west to east, but the relationships of academic power would remain stultified.

To strike a more optimistic note, one could contend that, to an extent, such academic travelling seems already to have produced results in areas like postcolonial studies where scholars from history, literature and the social sciences have come together to explain the complex phenomenon of colonialism and its aftermath. There has also been a blending and even a breaking down of the boundaries between

literary criticism and creative writing at burgeoning literary festivals (the Jaipur Fest being perhaps the most high-profile example of such literary 'melas') where writers freely rub shoulders with critics. One might indeed argue that Indian scholars of post-colonialism like Gayatri Spivak and Indian-origin writers like Salman Rushdie belong to this older 'diasporic' tradition of reading texts and producing literature simultaneously, *parivrajakas* who wander tirelessly about, criss-crossing territories.

Would such an ancient quasi-'Indian' model of a 'university of wandering scholars' be receptive to the creative arts? Short answer: To travel, as Plato's Athenian Stranger stated long ago, is in itself an education. Travel trains us in conviviality and tolerance, in intellectual empathy; so yes, in principle, such a 'travelling university' would be quite receptive to an equitable dialogue with the creative and performing arts.

Question 11: What about roots, though, what about emotional belonging, what about 'authenticity anxieties' what about that still centre that all writers need? Will not all the hectic David Lodge-ish to-ing and fro-ing, the showing off, the global strutting, the self-marketing, implied by this peripatetic model of the university strike at the very heart of creatively rewriting the humanities by directing us towards 'performance' rather than 'substance'?

Conclusion: 'the fabrication of clouds'

> *Cleinias the Cretan: O Athenian Stranger, inhabitant of Attica I will not call you, for you seem to deserve rather to be named after the goddess herself; because you go back to first principles you have thrown a light upon the argument . . . And can you show that what you have been saying is true?*
>
> *Athenian Stranger: To be absolutely sure of the truth of matters concerning which there are many opinions, is an attribute of the Gods not given to man, Stranger; but I shall be very happy to tell you what I think . . .*
>
> *Cleinias the Cretan: Your opinion, Stranger, about the questions which are now being raised, is precisely what we want to hear.*
>
> —*Plato, 'Laws'*

> *Whoever teaches without emancipating stultifies. [Emancipation] . . . is about recognizing that there are not two levels of intelligence, that any human work of art is the practice of the same intellectual potential.*

> *In all cases, it is a question of observing, comparing, and combining, of making and noticing how one has done it. What is possible is reflection: that return to oneself that is . . . an unconditional attention to one's intellectual acts, to the route they follow and to the possibility of always moving forward by bringing to bear the same intelligence on the conquest of new territories. He who makes a distinction between the manual work of the worker or the common man and clouds of rhetoric remains stultified. The fabrication of clouds is a human work of art that demands as much – neither more nor less – labour and intellectual attention as the fabrication of shoes or locks.*
>
> *—Ranciere, 'The Ignorant Schoolmaster'*

In the modern university, we find the arts estranged from art criticism and creative writing from critical theory. The fictional figure of the Athenian Stranger in Plato's *Laws* and that of the historical Joseph Jacotot in Ranciere's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* both embody this rift.

The present chapter has elaborated on Ranciere's arguments concerning rifts in modern processes of education by discussing a very obvious instance of academic inequality between marginal courses on 'creative writing' and more central courses on 'literary criticism' in our universities. It has done so by focussing on the speech-act of 'ignoring' as a measure of what Ranciere calls 'contempt', a social emotion predicated on a presumption of moral, class and intellectual inequality. Applying these concepts to five (actually, six!) possible models of the university, I have sought to show that these models would not necessarily all have the 'same' attitude towards the humanities. Were I to adopt the ludic mode recommended by Eco and award a fake 'mark-sheet' to each of these models for their empathetic (or otherwise) stances towards humanities courses it would, for the reasons already adumbrated, probably look something like the one below:

Total Marks:		100
00	Standard University	40
01	The Institute	60
02	A Rights-Based University	70
03	The 'Internet' University	80
04	Tagore's 'Shantiniketan'	90
05	The Travelling University	70

In presenting any score-sheet like the one above, we must of course pay heed to the sensible replies of Plato's Stranger to Cleinias the Cretan's

question: "And can you show that what you have been saying is true?" The Stranger responds: "To be absolutely sure of the truth of matters concerning which there are many opinions, is an attribute of the Gods not given to man . . . but I shall be very happy to tell you what I think". This chapter has argued inter alia that, in the humanities, if one sincerely shares 'what one thinks', that's half the burden of 'virtue', namely, the creation of an equitable or convivial empathy. Now, in the final section of this chapter, I will briefly comment on these emotive resonances of learning that were particularly emphasized in Tagore's idea of the university (Model 0.4).

Discussing Model 0.4, I had quoted Ranciere on how important it was in 'true' learning to "work in the gap between feeling and expression, between the silent language of emotion and the arbitrariness of the spoken tongue". Returning to this issue which naturally also bears upon the disciplinary gap between creative and critical discourses, I will now suggest that poetry and story may seem 'useless' in terms of the efficient communication of information but they do appear to have a sound evolutionary purpose. Contra Anubhuti (her name means 'experience' in Sanskrit), who sharply argued that the humanities do not seem to equip us with any competitive survival skills in the rough world out there, I will argue that this is precisely what they do.

Poetry and story have been preserved as 'discourse universals' in all known human cultures across time because they exist as evolutionary resources teaching the human species how to imaginatively navigate the changing world of experience so crucial to cultural survival when we live increasingly cheek-by-jowl with danger – physically in our cities and virtually on Facebook and the Internet.

What literary genres like fiction, drama and poetry do is to provide us with *relatively low-cost means of taking mental risks*. Consider, for example, our physiological reactions when we read a ghost-story or adventure fiction. Our palms sweat, our pulse-rates shoot up and our throats go dry, even as we 'know' that the words on the page are pure make-believe. We don't actually have to go and climb that cliff or love that bounder in order to realize the dangers and aches inherent in these situations. Just imagine, then, how infinitely useful this 'lazy machine' of literature, as Umberto Eco calls it, is: it extracts intellectual labour from us while giving us the illusion of enjoying our leisure!

Literary genres are the empathy engines of our mental lives. Thus a principle justification for envisaging the place accorded to the humanities in our universities is the place they accord to subjects like literature. I have further argued in this chapter that the creative writer – whose livelihood depends on the creation of interest and empathy – should

also find an essential place in literature departments. Anybody who studies the emotions knows that they have one most peculiar characteristic. It is impossible to achieve emotional arousal, to get someone to be surprised, amazed, frightened, etc., simply by folding one's arms and saying 'I surprise you!', 'I amaze you!' or 'I frighten you!' So in order to frighten someone you have, for instance, to tell her a ghost story; to amaze someone you have to think of some engaging situation or incident that challenges our ordinary everyday beliefs – and so on. One of the fundamental truths about human minds just happens to be that they are emotionally stimulated *not* through direct statements but through indirect means. Literature is the most fundamental of these indirect means to stimulate the emotions and thus to lay the foundation of an empathetic political education in the truest sense.

Given our specialized language abilities, that is, and the ancient evolutionary links between language, emotion and culture, we could conclude that we are *all* instinctively poets whether we like it or not. Further, even if we believe we in fact possess no such poetic instincts at all, tests of the following kind may establish that, unbeknownst to us, we do. Here are two simple tests that partially 'check' this hypothesis:

Question 12. If you had to decide intuitively, even without recourse to the meanings of the words below, to pick the ones that you would use in a poem, would you select the first list or the second?

List 1	*List II*
Ocellus	*Existentialism*
Zephyr	*Imprimatur*
Quinquereme	*Thegosis*
Penumbra	*Mendacious*
Bijoux	*Potatory*

I've noted that students all over the world opt overwhelmingly for the list on the left when they answer the above question – even when they do not know the meanings of these words and even if they disclaim all knowledge of poetry – showing that the sound-patterns and morphological structures of words 'instinctively' seem to lead us to make similar choices. On to Test Question 13.

Question 13. Two of the haikus below happen to be written by a computer and two by real live poets in translation. Your task is to guess which are which!

1. *The hair-ornament of the sun*
   Has sunk
   Into the legendary sea

2. *All green in the leaves*
   I smell dark pools in the tree
   Crash! the moon has fled

3. *Still midnight, silent*
   Still waters, still frozen
   Battle, dusk and fear

4. *I love and fear him*
   Steadily, as the surf
   Roars on the coast of Ise

In contrast to Question 12, students as well as sophisticated teachers of literature have a lot of trouble with Question 13. They are hard put to it to guess which poems have been 'written' by a computer, getting the 'right' answers only 50 percent of the time. The motivation for test like these that I've concocted are simple. It is to show that our 'certainties' cannot always be relied on. In many ways our ignorance is our surest pathfinder to where the good research questions are. That is why we need to be open about admitting strange catalysers like writers and poets into the ideal republic of scholarship. It has been insightfully claimed in this regard that "creative writing is a critical method" (Jon Cook 2005). This is why it is absolutely essential that writing in all its burgeoning forms – poetry, drama, hybrid techno-productions, oral iterations – enters the ivory tower of academia as the new 'hero-speak'.

The writer, I believe, can constitute a democratizing – and much needed questioning – presence within the inherently conservative structure of the world university today in the present-day Indian – and world – context. As Ranciere and Plato passionately argue, the systems of education we have at present need to be radically and systematically revised so that they are far less rigid in their conception of what learning or scholarly achievement is. For instance, in my own fields of linguistic and literary studies, we may need to think in terms of forging more intimate connections between the isolated elitism of English and Hindi and the other Indian languages; we may also have to work at establishing robust links between the individual pleasures of literature and social programmes of literacy for all, as some of the models of the university that I have presented above imply.

Speaking for myself, I believe that some of the most exciting debates in education in the near future will arise out of struggle of various deprived groups, such as Dalits, to enter the literacy stakes and to insert their own texts and, even more importantly, *theories of text* into the traditional 'canon' as they increasingly gain power through literacy. An attendant opening up of cross-cultural 'international' and

'inter-disciplinary' studies will inevitably follow – and it is here that we may actively wish to revive some of those old revolutionary questions that have long been part of India's intellectual repertoire but have been pushed to the margins of serious discussion in our schools and universities. Today, we need to arrive at a productive synthesis of these time-honoured evolutionary/ revolutionary insights with the systematizing capabilities of the new e-technologies.

My own feeling is that a deep 'moral' pathology that has in fact been a recurrent problem down the centuries still plagues academia – and is currently felt with terrible acuteness. University professors today, as always, seem far too comfortably positioned; their trade-rights and bureaucratic privileges zealously guarded by the Platonic Censors of the University. Yet, it is precisely this self-preserving canniness of the professorial classes, their evident ability to settle into a complacent, prosy, uncontroversial sort of life – girt around by books, papers, doctrines and what have you – that the ironic, irreverent presence of the alien figure of the writer as clown and maven can help both destabilize and energize. In my view, it is scholars in the humanities, arms in arm with their artful writer confreres, who are best equipped to treat this malaise, this 'suicidal' stultification by explication, as Plato and Ranciere might have it. I end with a wonderful verse by the poet Kalidasa as long ago as the sixth century which points to exactly this pathology. Is not about time we got around to confronting and changing the scenario somewhat?

If a professor thinks what matters most
Is to have gained an academic post
Where he can earn a livelihood, and then
Neglect research, let controversy rest,
He's but a petty tradesman at the best,
Selling retail the work of other men.
(From the *Malavikagnimitra*
translated by John Brough)

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10 What humanities/social sciences can mean

Transmuting the 'two cultures' idea

Sasheej Hegde

Bridging divides

Arguments about educational provisions in a transforming world – the order, precisely, of the place of humanities and social sciences in our universities – tend to reflect and sustain particular practices of discipline and academic restructuring, as reflected, say, in the famous (or, should one be saying, infamous) debate fostered by C. P. Snow way back in the late 1950s in the context of British academia in particular (see Snow [1959] 1993).[1] The debate related to the 'two cultures' idea from which our paper takes a part of its title. Notwithstanding Snow's programmatic thrust, which was to articulate the gulf of understanding that separates science from the humanities in the modern university and in society generally (as well as his insistence that literary intellectuals could learn much from their scientific counterparts), I take it that the 'two cultures' idea also names a phenomenon which has to do with contradictory dispositions internal to academic disciplines, whether humanistic or otherwise.[2] My formulations here are meant precisely to come to terms with these 'dispositions' – styles of thought and practice *within* disciplines, if you will – so that in getting a measure of what humanities/social sciences can mean (to echo our main title), our effort will be to transcend the two cultures division (as a division *between* academic disciplines) that Snow was inadvertently legitimating and/or endorsing.[3] In short: while science and humanistic study (literature, in particular) may have figured as the terms of the controversy in the 'two cultures' debate spawned by Snow, they did not represent its final stakes; indeed, that the stakes in the 'two cultures' division have had to do ultimately with the status of *normative* considerations – considerations that invoke some sort of 'ought' claim. For the purposes of my short reflection here, I take it that two such claims have always been more important than others, namely, 'what ought to be believed?' and 'what ought to be done?'

In getting the measure of these normative stakes as well, I believe that transcending the 'two cultures' division instituted by Snow and others (for the others, I have in mind the many debates that structure the division of 'objects and methods' between the human sciences and the natural/physical sciences) is imperative.[4] Indeed, in lacing together this dual emphasis – at once, *internalist* (in the sense stated above, that is to say, the 'two cultures' idea as naming a phenomenon which has to do with contradictory dispositions internal to academic disciplines, whether humanistic or otherwise) and *normative* (in the sense disclosed about the status of 'ought' considerations in the conduct of our human affairs) – one is attempting to concretise how the line between the sciences and the humanities/social sciences might be drawn (without necessarily lapsing into claims or protestations about 'two cultures' or about whether the natural and human sciences are of the same kind).[5]

But, of course, the notion of 'humanities/social sciences' is in fact much more complex than it appears in the context of debates that form the basis of this paper. Indeed, theorisations of humanities and social sciences as the crucial element of competing (or divergent) modes of knowledge and knowing bring two apparently opposite senses of the modality into play. First, we understand these modes as 'that which relates to the human', an anthropological core connecting an idea with its realisation, a source with its context, a thing with its representation. The humanities/social sciences thus appear as an intermediary, as the means to an end or the agent of an operation. But of course, further theorisations make 'fidelity to the human' into the very principle of the humanities and social sciences, thereby inverting the perspective.[6] The modality to whose specificity one must be faithful is no longer simply the instrument of knowledge; it becomes the specific materiality defining its essence. This is certainly the case in the most classical exposition of the idea of 'two cultures' in C. P. Snow's lecture to this effect and the debate that followed, where the notion of 'humanities' is no longer the means to an end; it is, properly speaking, that which prescribes this end. Our effort here will be to complicate this thesis by casting a critical glance at contending models of scientific practice internal to science and to thematise their bearing for re-theorising the humanities and social sciences today.

Contending internal dispositions

Having transmuted the 'two cultures' idea to identify a phenomenon that has to do with contradictory dispositions *internal* to the practice

of academic disciplines (whether humanistic and otherwise), let us now try to come to terms with what this can entail for grasping what humanities/social sciences can mean. Broadly, and somewhat programmatically, it has to do with two contending models of academic practice, what I shall refer to as a 'scholastic' model as opposed to a more 'reflexive' model of humanities/social sciences. I must hasten to clarify that the 'scholastic' disposition is not exactly a problem in my scheme of representation, to the extent that it identifies and names equally a tendency internal to science and against which (or in terms of which) the 'reflexive' orientation (also internal to science) is articulated.[7] As already pointed out, the 'scholastic' and the 'reflexive' constitute distinct (albeit not quite mutually exclusive) dispositions *within* academic disciplines, humanistic and otherwise.[8]

Arguably, the scholastic disposition, as it subsumes the humanities and social sciences, has to do with an interest in a form of knowledge which (following more classical orientations) we may characterize as '*techne*' (roughly, the need to *know how* to do things, and which essentially has to do with getting things done) and '*episteme*' (which broadly has to do with understanding or 'pure theory' in the sense of wanting to *know why* things are done). In modular terms, the disposition also often translates into the requirement that all knowledge must be useful in practice, so that even as critique (or criticism) may be constructive and/or reparative, it (critique/criticism) is ultimately threatening or undermining of all claims of/for knowledge. What is more, the scholastic model often finds its epistemic rationale in conceiving the human sciences as an attempt to formulate and/or discover the theories and laws which govern human life and action, and accordingly translating into causal explanations of and technocratic solutions to human problems.

Now, of course, 'techne' and 'episteme' as governing impulses defining the scholastic model can conflict with each other, resulting in competing and contesting goals of humanistic inquiry and debate. The question thus becomes what are we seeking when we engage with (or critique) 'techne' from the perspective of 'episteme'; and, alternatively, approach 'episteme' from the standpoint of 'techne'. The model (or orientation) emerging from this intersecting field of questions is what may be framed as a more 'reflexive' disposition as much internal to the humanities and social sciences as the scholastic disposition presented in the immediately foregoing paragraphs. Arguably, and again somewhat schematically, the 'reflexive' model has to do with bridging the gap between 'techne' and 'episteme', so that in the disposition internal to this model the principal task is to clarify values, interests and

power relations as a basis for reflection and inquiry in the humanities and social sciences. Let me try to elaborate and, in the process, problematise a recent attempt to formulate the terms and conditions of this 'reflexive' model.

As thinking practitioners of the craft of scientific inquiry have observed, one element in the unravelling of science – as indeed the development of the individual sciences – has consisted in the disentangling of problems which are illuminated by taking human beings into account from those that are not, so that the reflexivity internal to the practice of science has to do with the presence or absence of the human element underscoring it.[9] In fact, as part of this opening up to the space of the human – and accordingly to the way human phenomena are modelled as 'social' in that they 'answer back' to the theorist or practitioner (unlike most natural phenomena) – the social theorist Bent Flyvbjerg, in a celebrated work entitled *Making Social Science Matter* (2001) has argued that a crucial aspect of the disentangling involves opening up to the relevant context of human action, which in human beings' is their everyday background skills in deciding what counts as the relevant objects and events (whose regularities, incidentally, the scholastic model tries to explain and/or predict) (see Flyvbjerg 2001: esp. Chs. 3–4). Consequently, Flybvjerg asserts (what also serves as the basis of his reflexive orientation):

> Context is not simply the singularity of each setting (as in a laboratory), nor the distinctive historical and social paths taken to produce such a setting, even if both may be important to understanding specific social phenomena. Ultimately, the human skills that determine the social context are based on judgments that cannot be understood in terms of concrete features and rules. Therefore a 'hard' theory of context in the social sciences is seemingly impossible. But if context decides what counts as relevant objects and events, and if the social context cannot be formalised in terms of features and rules, then social theory cannot be complete and predictive in the manner of much natural science theory, which does not have the problem of self-interpretive objects of study.
>
> (Flyvbjerg 2005/06: 39)

Now, of course, such a foregrounding of the reflexive model brings back the conception of the key 'difference' between the natural and human sciences that, among others, Charles Taylor (as we saw earlier fn. 5) has tried to consolidate and which we have actively sought to transcend and/or overcome. Importantly, the formulation is reductive

of the world of 'science' (as distinct and separate from the humanities and social sciences), in the sense that it is presumed (and even taken for granted) that the normal state of affairs in the sciences, where 'techne' and 'episteme' are held to rule, is settled and certain and that research aims and outputs are precisely meant to eliminate 'uncertainty' in the world of science. In reality, as works in the history and philosophy of science testify, the state of affairs in the sciences is hardly so settled or certain and no amount of new research will completely eliminate uncertainty (see, generally, Klemke et al. 1998). Indeed, as earlier questions are answered, new questions appear, so that uncertainty far from constituting a problem for science is a challenge, a catalyst for the latter.[10]

More frontally, the problem consists in arraigning against the scholastic as opposed to the reflexive, when actually (as we are formulating in the context of what humanities/social sciences can mean) the imperative is to transcend this binary: to attend as much to 'techne' as to 'episteme' (which, as part of the 'scholastic' disposition underscoring the humanities and social sciences, cannot be avoided), while at the same time (in the context of the 'reflexive' orientation) admitting of their intersection and, accordingly, attempting to bridge the gap between 'techne' and 'episteme'. The reflexive disposition cannot but work off the scholastic orientation, bridging the divide between 'techne' and 'episteme' that the latter can entail.[11] But note, one is certainly not challenging the idea, central to the humanities and social sciences, that they are ultimately about 'meanings' (in terms of interests, desires and values that human beings possess and/or express) and about power.[12] What we are complicating is the basis of such an orientation – one attending to the meanings and mechanisms of power – which forms the fulcrum of a reflexive thrust inimical to or conflicting with the ways of 'techne' and 'episteme' and their intersection. Indeed, pushing this axis of questioning further, we can see that it implicates the fraught question of 'ought', whose status in *normative* terms most reflexive models underestimate. What follows are some thoughts that bear on this axis as they impinge on the *place* of the humanities and social sciences in our universities.

The practical autonomy of the normative

The idea that I have been underscoring – namely, that the scholastic and the reflexive constitute dispositions internal to academic practice (whether grounded in the humanities or otherwise) and that attending to the dynamics of their framing as indeed intersection is

imperative – has a bearing on the normative considerations that I now want to foreground as part of our engagement with what humanities/social sciences can mean beyond the 'two cultures' idea and/or the 'difference' of object and method posited between the natural and social sciences. Recall that I had stated at the very outset of our paper that the definitive stakes in the 'two cultures' division have to do ultimately with the status of *normative* considerations – considerations that invoke some sort of 'ought' claim – while also affirming, for the purposes of our reflection here, that two such claims have always been more important than others, namely, 'what ought to be believed?' and 'what ought to be done?' Without doubt, the normative question along the lines indicated more soundly implicates the reflexive disposition underscoring the humanities and social sciences. But that is not quite the point I want to be making or insisting upon. We need to look further into the very status of normative considerations in the sense invoked.

Notably, the two 'ought' claims that we have foregrounded – namely, 'what ought to be believed?' and 'what ought to be done?' – can be seen to be at the heart of the humanities and social sciences; and, what is more, have often been the basis of the case that the latter disciplines form an indispensable core of any credible system of educational provision or curriculum. While these normative considerations seem like distinctly philosophical questions, it must be reiterated that they are not confined to the philosophical. They carry a distinctive political edge, whether oriented towards retaining a certain state of affairs or imploring its transformation. The questions spring up everywhere in the context of our reflexive and scholastic pursuits, whether relating to how human action is to be viewed or how a text ought to be interpreted (indeed, what does it mean to address the specificity of an action or to get a text right?); how an informant's statements of belief or a character's professions of love in a novel or a poem ought to be assessed; whether (or how) an abstract painting can be said to mean something, and, if so, what kind of significance is to be attributed to any such meaning; what ought we to believe about the importance of the arts and humanities or the crisis of 'representation' in knowledge, culture and politics in the early twentieth century of colonial India (for instance); and so on. So also can deep-seated political / philosophical questions come to the forefront, like under what conditions is the state's use of coercive powers justifiable, how to construct the necessity of civil disobedience, are sexual moralities to be legislated, how to think the constant intertwining of religion and politics in the public domain, and so on.

Clearly, these questions involve interdisciplinary styles of thinking and doing research between and across the humanities and social sciences (and can even implicate a new line of thinking within them as well). But my aim here is to explore further the possibilities for renewing both our idea and understanding of the humanities and social sciences, possibilities which are implied in these and such other questions. Such an line of reflection is all the more imperative in an academic context such as ours, which has sought to contest (or render problematic) the idea that the human disciplines are all and everywhere contributing to the same conversation about various lived normative issues, whether in the past or present or even in an imagined future. For one, there is great suspicion underscoring the humanities and social sciences today about there being a singular source of truth and value or about their being any one way to address and engage normative issues and accompanying 'ought' claims at a *first-order* level (that is to say, by simply taking them on, trying to think about them and making up one's mind in conversation with texts and with others about what one ought to believe or what one ought [or ought not] to do or have done). Secondly, there is the further suspicion that first-order normative claims have been so various and have changed so often that we have a better chance of explaining why people have come to have various views about what ought to be believed or ought to be done rather than we have of assessing the 'quality' of their answers.

In this light, one can see why the idea that literary and cultural products and practices could be said to imply (or even presuppose) truth and value claims has very little acceptance in contemporary academic circles. In fact, the idea that there *are* truth claims about normative matters that ought to be pursued, discussed or assessed as such (rather than as historically contextualised 'truths' [or bits of evidence] about what people believed at a specific time and place) is approached as an outmoded and insipid humanism (see Culler 2005; also Gumbrecht 2005). In other words, if there is in the humanities and social sciences today no way to resolve *first-order* questions of normative truth and value, then that is all one would think there is to the enterprise of human reflection and inquiry, namely, the scholastic study of why people have come to believe what they do or come to do what they do at a particular time and place. Indeed, on our terms as reconstructed in the previous section of the chapter, this is clearly another case of the reflexive disposition yielding to or making way for the scholastic orientation internal to academic disciplines (humanistic and otherwise). But there is more to this intertwining, as we shall presently see.

One can certainly claim that this scepticism about the independent or autonomous status of the normative is something like a necessary condition for the scholastic and reflexive study of why people have come to believe what they generally do, or did, at a particular time or place. But if it is 'truth-claims' that are primarily at issue within the humanities and social sciences – if we want to know why a particular picture of human life or cultivation of virtue appeals to us, or not; why certain forms of behaviour or a certain character repels us; why we cannot make up our mind about another person or image; whether a person's sacrifice of self-interest for a greater good is rational or foolish; what form of pleasure we take in reading a novel or watching a film or even looking at a painting – then it may be equally meaningful to consider what happens when such explanatory considerations are understood to have replaced (or overtaken) by what we have been calling *first-order* normative questions (about what ought to be believed and/or done) in favour of what we may be characterising sideways on as scholastic questions about what *explains* why people do this or that, believe this or that.[13]

In other words: the point is simply that the two sorts of questions as a possible ground of regrouping what humanities/social sciences can mean – the *first-order* normative questions about what ought to be believed and/or done and the sideways on scholastic orientation about what explains why people do this or that, believe this or that – are logically distinct and irreducibly different. Normative questions, as first-order questions, are practically unavoidable in a 'first-personal' context, and necessarily linked to the human practice of giving and demanding reasons for what we do, especially when everything that we do affects, changes, or limits what another would have been able to do. One is not a mere bystander in a scheme of things pulled this way and that by impulses and desires; one has to steer.[14] Note, one is not denying that a certain sociological and/or psychological condition is underwriting our attitudes and dispositions as human actors in a bounded scheme of things. Rather, the point is that no such discovery or postulation can of itself count as a reason to do or forbear from doing anything; indeed that the autonomy, or possible self-rule, at issue in these discussions is not a metaphysical one, but involves (shall we say) the 'practical autonomy' of the normative.

What this must entail for our conception of what humanities/social sciences can mean is that, even as the scholastic and reflexive dispositions are bound together, they cannot eliminate the agent's perspective whenever he or she has to decide what to believe or do. The fact that people are often self-deceived, or even grossly ignorant, of why

they do what they do (even devising 'reasons' for their actions only afterwards, indulging in what we can call 'rationalisations') cannot discount the 'practical autonomy' of the normative. Surely the fact that people often act without being able to explain or justify why they do what they do cannot be a reason to act in any which way; the essence of being human is being able to steer. One is here reminded of a thought structuring the work of Wittgenstein, and I think it is befitting that we should round off short rumination thus. 'Working in philosophy', he tells us in the writings put together as *Culture and Value*, "is really more a working on oneself. On one's own interpretation. On one's way of seeing things. (And what one expects of them)" (Wittgenstein 1984: no pagination). I think these are great lessons from the humanities and social sciences to harness and have their place in our universities, indeed in all our public-private enterprises today.

Notes

1 I am grateful to Professor Mrinal Miri for nudging me on to participate in this important exercise of reflection and commentary on the status of the humanities/social sciences. The invitation came at a time when I was particularly under a state of siege, and, although hesitant, I could not have evaded Professor Miri's call. The moment has now passed, and I am delighted to be a part of this venture.

2 The caveat 'whether humanistic or otherwise' is, I think, important. Lest it seem, in the course of the paper, that we are grafting (or extrapolating) a pronounced social science vocabulary on to the domain of the humanities, one could do with the reminder that the role of the humanities in contemporary life is a continuation and transformation of their role since their invention by the Renaissance humanists of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. This role had to do with increasing the possibilities of, and deepening the contexts for, judgement; see also Chow (2005: 47–48). Indeed, far from diminishing, the demand for judgements of various kinds, including an estimation of what is 'human' in humanity, is all the more pressing and constant in this period of astonishing interventions in biology and in nature more broadly. For more along this axis, imploring the role of the humanities so conceived in contemporary life, see Stewart (2005). Note also that the genesis of humanistic study in the thought of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment does not make it merely a product of its moment of emergence. There are transmutations that have been effected in the course of their trajectory across cultural locales and temporal matrices. See also our fn. 12 in this chapter incorporating the humanities scholar Geoffrey Galt Harpham and the text from which it springs.

3 The literary critic and contemporary of Snow, namely F. R. Leavis, who clashed with the former in the early 1960s of course believed that it was not science per se that one needed to confront, but rather its consequences; indeed science being taken to be one of the symptoms of modern civilization that needed to be critiqued (see Ortolano 2005). There are also

suggestions to the effect that the exchange between Snow and Leavis was prefigured in the 1880s in a set of formulations by Thomas Huxley and Matthew Arnold; see, for an overview, White (2005).

4 For the latter terms of division, incidentally, we will have more to say presently (see fn. 5 in this chapter).

5 Readers may be interested to note that in a brief commentary on aspects of Charles Taylor's presentation of the 'difference' between the natural and human sciences – the idea, summarily in Taylor, that in the human sciences, a 'theory' is not about an independent object, but one that is partly constituted by self-understanding and that, consequently, in the human sciences we are dealing with an object of a special sort; indeed, that the human sciences are concerned with 'self-interpreting animals' and that the phenomena and practices which are the focus of particular human sciences are constituted by this interpretive activity, so that in confronting the 'difference' between the supposedly fully objective, independent objects of the natural sciences and the 'self-constituted' objects of the human sciences, any proper methodology of the latter must reflect on this difference (see, especially, Taylor (1985); Hacking (1986) is also relevant along this axis): the philosopher-historian of science, Thomas Kuhn had maintained (against Taylor's way of presenting the matter) that "no more in the natural than in the human sciences is there some neutral, culture-independent set of categories within which the populations – whether of objects or of actions – can be described" (Kuhn 1998: 131). More pointedly, Kuhn insisted that "the natural sciences, . . . though they may require what I have called a hermeneutic base, are not themselves hermeneutic enterprises" (ibid., 133); indeed that while the human sciences are hermeneutic enterprises, one may still ask whether they are restricted to the hermeneutic, to interpretation: "Isn't it possible that here and there, over time, an increasing number of specialities will find paradigms that can support normal, puzzle-solving research?" (ibid.). For Kuhn, clearly, it is not a question of whether the social and the natural sciences are of the same kind; rather, "how the line between the two enterprises might be drawn" (ibid., 129).

6 This is all the more so in the new world of biology and life sciences as it bears on our definitions of life (as epitomized, say, in the research on the human genome) and the normative significance of such interventions for our thinking about things human. I have encountered these questions in Hegde (2010).

7 The expression 'scholastic disposition' is adapted from Bourdieu, who (borrowing from the ordinary language philosopher John L. Austin) speaks of the 'scholastic point of view' and identifies it broadly with the 'academic vision' (see Bourdieu 1990). The latter is, of course, quite critical of this standpoint, pointing out that what all scholars "whose profession it is to think and/or speak about the world have the most chance of overlooking are the social presuppositions that are inscribed in the scholastic point of view" (Bourdieu 1990: 381). We share no such presumptions about the 'scholastic', although Bourdieu does have a point worth considering. In our scheme, Bourdieu's disclaimers about the 'scholastic' would translate into the 'reflexive' disposition that we also see as internal to academic practice. See also, for a further point from within Bourdieu, our fn. 11 in this chapter.

8 Such a mode of usage (or deployment) also renders problematic all claims to a 'phronetic' social science and humanities, which has found currency in recent times; see Flyvbjerg (2001, 2005/06), some of whose claims we shall query in course. Quite unlike the latter modality of work, which juxtaposes the reflexive (or phronetic) *against* what is forwarded as the 'scientistic', our claims about such dispositions internal to science are not premised on their mutually exclusivity. The idea of 'scientism' can raise other questions about all modalities of inquiry as well, but we shall defer that engagement for another occasion.

9 See, among others, the work of the thoughtful and erudite physicist and Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg (2001). The idea of the disentangling of questions, based on the nearness or otherwise of the human element, was a key idea underscoring Comtean 'positivism'; see Auguste Comte ([1865] 2009: esp. Ch.1).

10 See also Weinberg (2001) in general. Without doubt, one may ask as to why many are not open to accepting and accommodating uncertainty as marking the domain of the sciences? Interestingly, one strand of opinion, as epitomized by Snow's 'two cultures' thesis, has it that there is a lack of understanding of science generally. There is certainly more to the two cultures idea, all the same. For this, see the cultural historian Stefan Collini's extensive introduction placing Snow's 'two cultures' in historical perspective (Collini 1993).

11 Although not strictly posed in these terms, a somewhat similar argument structures Bourdieu (2003), where he calls attention to a mode of reflexivity – 'scientific reflexivity', as he mentions it – which stands opposed to other extant modes of reflexivity, namely, "the narcissistic reflexivity of postmodern anthropology" and "the egological reflexivity of phenomenology", and which (that is, 'scientific reflexivity') "applies to the knowing subject the most brutally objectivist tools that anthropology and sociology provide . . . and aims . . . to grasp everything that the thinking of the anthropologist (or sociologist) may owe to the fact that she (or he) is inserted in a national scientific field, with its traditions, habits of thought, problematics, shared commonplaces, and so on, and to the fact that she occupies it in a particular position . . . with 'interests' of a particular kind which unconsciously orientate her scientific choices (of discipline, method, object, etc.)" (Bourdieu 2003: 284). I have elsewhere tried to assess these claims forwarded by Bourdieu (see Hegde 2011). Particularly noteworthy for our purposes here is that Bourdieu's claims for 'scientific reflexivity' incorporate elements of the 'scholastic' disposition that he deprecates (for the latter see our fn. 7 in this chapter).

12 In fact, as Flyvbjerg formulates, the perspective yields four 'value-rational' questions, which must all be answered for specific substantive problematics to emerge in the context of the social sciences and humanities, namely, (a) Where are we going? (b) Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power? (c) Is this development desirable? (d) What, if anything, should we do about it? (see Flyvbjerg 2001: esp. Ch. 5; as also his 2005/06). Interestingly, the humanities scholar Harpham has sought to condense 'traditional rationales for humanistic study' in the following words: "*The scholarly study of documents and artifacts produced by human beings in the past enables us to see the world from different points*

of view so that we may better understand ourselves" (Harpham 2005: 23, emphasis in original). He further observes (before going on to examine the formulation closely): "This banal formulation may seem to have limited interest for us, but if we probe it a bit we can discover, preserved in the amber of tradition, elements that retain a certain enduring and even unexplored vitality" (ibid.).

13 I am inclined to think that this move also underscores what Akeel Bilgrami has been outlining in his ruminations on value and agency – especially the point about value being embedded in things rather than being brought to bear on things through the medium of human agency. The latter axis of invoking human agency as the source of value underscores Kantian autonomy, although it is a space somewhat independent of this latter axis that Bilgrami is seeking to formulate (vide his recourse to Gandhi [and Marx] via the trajectories of early modern dissenting traditions). See Bilgrami (2012; as also his 2006).

14 So put there is no avoiding the space of (Kantian) autonomy, both as a matter of fact (in the sense of the human capacity to choose more or less deliberatively) and as a suggestion of right (the right to exercise that capacity without external interference) although consider also Marx's famous 'Theses on Feuerbach' to the effect that: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it" (Marx and Engels [1845] 1969: 15). For Kant and the 'limits' of autonomy, see Shell (2009).

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11 MOOCs

Virtual but not virtuous

Apoorvanand

Ms. Smriti Irani, Minister, former Minister for Human Resource Development called upon the youth of India to sign up for MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courseware). She assured students that the central government has been working on creation of MOOCs: the best universities of India will be engaged in the process and that, when ready, our own MOOCs will be available to the youth absolutely free of cost.

MOOCs got a mention in the presidential speech in the Parliament; the first after the new government under the leadership of Narendra Modi assumed power in Delhi. The central cabinet has given approval for signing an agreement between the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the US Department of State for cooperation in the field of higher education for Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM), a program for online education.

The SWAYAM platform server will be based in India and US universities will be invited to offer post-graduate academic programs with certification. Officials said that this would be offered using open edX. From India, edX has Indian Institute of Technology–Bombay, Indian Institute of Management–Bangalore, and BITS–Pilani as partners.[1]

The academic community of India is largely unaware of this move. The government did not even feel the need to consult universities and academics before taking such a momentous decision, which, if implemented, will have a deep and long-term impact on the system of higher education in India. The institutions collaborating in this initiative have done it without taking their faculty members on board.

The government of India is pursuing the path of MOOCs at a time when the enthusiasm for it is ebbing. According to a survey conducted by the Babson Survey Research Group in 2014, only 16 percent of the academic leaders surveyed thought that MOOCs were sustainable; 51 percent of the 2800 academic leaders had a contrary view.

This is considerably low if we look at the numbers in 2012, when MOOCs had started blossoming: 28 percent of the academic leaders then believed that MOOCs were the future of higher education. Only 26 percent felt otherwise.

The basic concern regarding MOOCs for these administrators has more to do with its economics. They do not see in them potential to generate income. Any return would be indirect in nature and hard to quantify. They feel that MOOCs can serve the purpose of increasing the visibility of their institutions and help them recruit students from far and wide.

MOOCs started with the promise of subverting the existing brick-and-mortar university structure. The *New York Times* called 2012 the first year of the MOOCs era. That year, two Stanford professors founded Coursera – an online platform for free lessons – and MIT released its edX online teaching program together with Harvard University. In the same year, most major developed countries introduced their own MOOCs; such as "Future Learn" in the UK; "FUN" in France; "iUniversity" in Germany; "JMOOC" in Japan; and "Open-2Study" in Australia. The EU also had its own platform called "OpenupEd."

Within just one year, hundreds of lessons were contributed to Coursera by more than 100 top international universities (such as Princeton and Stanford) and the number of registered students from various countries worldwide exceeded 7 million. MOOCs were by now clearly the most talked about on the international education scene.

In China, Shanghai Jiaotong University (SJTU) and Tsinghua University have taken the lead by launching online classes, with other higher education institutions also presenting bold ideas and initiatives. Some high schools have created "Khan Academy" micro-courses to free students from remedial classes and excessive piles of books.[2]

I recently read a book titled *Choodi Bazar Mein Ladki (A girl in a bangle market)* by my colleague Krishna Kumar, a renowned teacher of education at Delhi University. The book is result of an educational journey he undertook along with his M.Ed. Class to Firozabad, a small town in Uttar Pradesh, famous for its Glass industry. Girl students of the class experienced the horrible working condition of the small factories which produce various products we use daily.

They come face to face with the hard reality of child labor employed in large numbers in these small-scale factories. They also visited one of the non-formal educational centers put up for these children where they are expected to be educated under a government program. They assemble there after a long, arduous day. The students and the teacher

are expected to say something to them as they are important dignitaries from the capital of the country visiting these unfortunate boys and girls. The teacher, who is our author, notices a small girl trying to read something from her textbook. This is a story of a child seeking *dua* from Allah. "If you chance to meet Allah, what would you tell Him?" The teacher asks the child. "I would ask him, why did He give birth to me in this poverty?" and tears streamed down her small cheeks. Silently, with her head bowed, she cried and the tears kept hitting the hard, cold floor of that non-formal school.

Next morning the class assembles at the famous Taj Mahal in Agra to share and decipher their experiences of Firozabad. The challenge before them is to turn their personal experiences into educational experiences. "My self-identity as a teacher was shaken . . .". In desperation, he turns to his students and collectively they struggle to make meaning of their Firozabad trip. Krishna Kumar has dedicated a chapter to this struggle titled "Taj par Kaksha" (Class at Taj).

Krishna Kumar confesses that it had not occurred to him before this journey that there were some experiences that he, as a man, would never be able to understand as intensely as his women-students. His educational journey to Firozabad forced him to examine his self-awareness, the so-called neutrality of social spaces. He says, "At the root of education is the concept of learning. It has been the axis of my life as a teacher to keep exploring it. However, even after having taught thousands of girls I had remained oblivious of the process of learning they undergo to become an Indian woman." This painful discovery that the most crucial learning of the girls had been happening independent of the syllabus and curriculum leads the teacher to reorganize his self-awareness and the book is born out of this journey. This is what makes teaching, learning and knowledge creation indivisible.

Krishna Kumar understands that experience in itself is not knowledge. However, if your experiences that shake you to your core are allowed to pass through a thought process, the knowledge generated in the course will have a different glow about it.

What is unsaid in the book is that the exercise of teaching and learning is a very local affair and the teacher cannot succeed without an active student body. It underlines the fundamental unity between "the knower and what is known," as explained by Bernstein in in his paper.[3]

Who creates knowledge and who is the knower? Is it only the student who knows or, as we saw from the preceding example, the teacher is also the knower? Can the two be separated?

Bernstein published his paper in 2000. MOOCs were nowhere on the horizon then. But he gives us a very critical term, "Official

knowledge." "We have for the first time, a dehumanizing principle, for the organization and orientation of official knowledge," he says.[4] What Bernstein was prophetically telling us in his paper that commercial interests would soon take over the business of certifying what knowledge is worthwhile.

I have been wondering whether it is at all possible for Krishna Kumar to prepare a MOOC, which will communicate the same pain, agony and joy of going through this educational journey.

In other words we may ask ourselves, what constitutes this class. Or, what, exactly is the content of this exercise? Going back to the troubling 1960s, thinking about this book, I remember my friend Pankaj Chandra suggesting to me while we were loitering leisurely on a university campus that the best way to start a discussion on the MOOCs could be by asking this question: Whose Alma Mater would a MOOCs be?

It is evident that what was largely an American phenomenon barely three years back has now become a global rage. Policymakers, education planners and leaders worldwide are seriously considering MOOCs as a viable alternative to the brick-and-mortar university system, which are increasingly becoming costlier. Governments claim that it is difficult to provide matching funds to the ever-increasing demand for tertiary or higher education. The existing university structures are unable to accommodate the new aspirants. European countries have not been far behind. In 2014 a European MOOCs summit was held and now it has become an annual feature. All governments in Europe are taking steps to create their own models of MOOCs. In the Middle East the Queen Rania foundation is collaborating with edX to create MOOCs in Arabic.

As expected, India has rushed to join the race. It started in 2012–13 itself. The first major indication came from Sam Pitroda, advisor to the then Prime Minister on innovations. Speaking in the convocation ceremony of the University of Delhi, he claimed that we did not need too many teachers. The very idea of higher education was being transformed and times were not far when it would turn from being teacher centric to student centric. We would need only four or five good, world-class teachers for a discipline and technology would enable students in any part of the world to access their courses.

Anant Agrawal, the founder of edX, one of the major companies offering MOOCs, says that MOOCs are the future of higher education. The days of professors with yellow notes, cracking the same jokes at the same intervals are over. Teachers cannot take their students for

granted as they can reach a good course, which is constantly evolving through MOOCs.

The underlying assumption in these claims is that the experience of good teaching can now be availed with the help of MOOCs. It is also assumed that the students have a right to have "the best". If the best is available in one of the Ivy League universities, why should a student from Patna be deprived and settle for a much lesser teaching talent?

The promise of MOOCs is so great that Zhen Huang, Vice President of Shanghai Jiaotong University, Chinese Dean of Paris Tech SJTU Elite Institute of Technology warns, "MOOCs break time and space confinements and radically change the way people acquire knowledge. University walls come down and national boundaries become unimportant. If our teachers continue the traditional cramming method of teaching, students will vote with their 'eyes and ears.' They very well may sit in a Chinese classroom, only to be looking at a laptop with a MOOC made by a US university. Education reform is imperative."[5]

The belief behind such assertions is that the best knowledge is being produced in the universities of the United States, and it is only democratic that students who do not have the privilege to enroll as students in these universities get a chance to access this knowledge. MOOC has become a means to realize this democratic dream.

Who knows what is good for the students? It is either the governments or the leaders of the universities who take decision on behalf of the students and teachers. In 2013, the president of the San Jose State University started introducing MOOC-based courses in various departments. The department of philosophy was asked to integrate a course on justice, prepared by the renowned professor Michael Sandel, into its curriculum. Professors of the department refused. They decided to write an open letter to Professor Sandel himself to explain their decision.

"In spite of our admiration for your ability to lecture in such an engaging way to such a large audience,"[6] the letter's authors wrote, "we believe that having a scholar teach and engage with his or her own students is far superior to having those students watch a video of another scholar engaging his or her students."

The letter said,

> There is no pedagogical problem in our department that JusticeX solves, nor do we have a shortage of faculty capable of teaching our equivalent course." Further, "the thought of the exact same social justice course being taught in various philosophy

> departments across the country is downright scary – something out of a dystopian novel. Departments across the country possess unique specializations and character, and should stay that way. Universities tend not to hire their own graduates for a reason. They seek different influences. Diversity in schools of thought and plurality of points of view are at the heart of liberal education.

The advocates of MOOCs claim that it contains not only lectures but also reflections of students. Questioning this claim, the letter raised an issue which has not been debated fully in this context,

> what kind of message are we sending our students if we tell them that they should best learn what justice is by listening to the reflections of the largely white student population from a privileged institution like Harvard? Our very diverse students gain far more when their own experience is central to the course and when they are learning from our own very diverse faculty, who bring their varied perspectives to the content of courses that bear on social justice.

Professor Sandel did not think it fit to engage with these substantive issues. In his reply he merely said that he respected the right of the faculty to design their own courses. The letter had, however, made another significant point which Professor Sandel chose not to address. The ethical issue of "famous" or "star" professors collaborating with companies like edX remains unaddressed. Why do they want to reach millions using the MOOC platform? Would the population thus reached be called their student mass even if they would never get a chance to interact with the "teachers" and they themselves would never know who these anonymous students are?

The idea of education or learning has traditionally been associated with students and teachers interacting with each other in close proximity. It is not only the discipline they engage with, they engage with each other. Gayatri Spivak says that for teaching to happen in a meaningful manner, the teacher has to know her student.

Professor Castillo of Cornell University teaches theatre. Discussing the pressure she feels from the MOOC ideology, she says that it is based on certain tech myths:

> Following upon the recent work of Judith Burnet and her colleagues, let us remind ourselves of a few of the dangerous tech myths in education, before we ponder a bit more closely why they

are important to us as gender conscious/feminist scholars and teachers. Burnet et al. (2009) ask, schematically, what kinds of myths we implicitly use to define what our technologized society is like. Here are some of their suggestions. Modern society is:

- Connected and global – there is no one and nowhere "outside."
- Time and space have changed, and we can talk to anyone, anywhere, at anytime in the twinkling of an eye, that is, we can transcend our bodies.
- The new age is more democratic, open and accessible to all, with more opportunities to exercise choice and participate in decision-making.
- We can address the division of the world between developed and wealthy and the developing world by taking the technology of the developed world and diffusing it to everyone everywhere.[7]

Is media transparent, and technology an unequivocal good? Raising this issue she suggests that

> in its ideologically charged erasure of ethnicized and sexed bodies, the current trends in higher education are returning us precisely to the 1960s mindset decried by McLuhan – an illusion of control over highly fragmented systems comes down to privileging precisely and exclusively the things those systems do well. The scaling effects of MOOCs tend to push every more to the background precisely those unexplored gendered, raced dynamics.[8]

It has often been said that there could be problems with humanities courses being transacted through MOOCs, sciences and technology course lend more easily to this medium. Castillo recalls a conversation with her son, Carlos Castillo-Garsow, a professor of mathematics education at Eastern Washington University who regularly publishes on computer-based education and grew up with Teatrotaller and wrote the following:

> There are things that are easy to do online and things that are hard to do online. When you try to run an online course, the medium puts pressure on people to downplay the importance of things that you can't do easily in it. Restricting a class to what can only be done online is like restricting a theatre to producing a play using only two spots as their lights. Suddenly the way of communicating

> with the audience becomes all about where you place those spots, and the play is about what you highlight with those spots . . .
>
> Sometimes the right choice is things like lectures and drills – things that MOOCs do well. But sometimes . . . the right way to read a play is going through the process of performing it. You can't teach Teatrotaller as a MOOC. It's impossible. In a world where Cornell moves to MOOCs, that's Cornell saying that the things students learn by doing Teatrotaller are not important, whereas the things students learn by reading the play and listening to a lecture on it and writing a paragraph in their email about it are important. The medium controls the message.[9]

There is another, sinister implication as well, having to do with social class, access, and a politics of location. I go back here to one of the myths adduced to by Burnet and her collaborators, the myth that "we can address the division of the world between developed and wealthy and the developing world by taking the technology of the developed world and diffusing it to everyone everywhere." Much of the praise of online education is focused precisely on this aspect: that anyone, anywhere can have access to the best and most advanced education in the world, taking courses from top professors at Harvard, MIT, Stanford, Berkeley.

It would be difficult for many of us, especially those who live in the first-world countries to even think that people may be ready to face physical attacks of all kinds to be able to belong to a space called school or college or university. As I write these lines, my mind goes back to the Dalit families from a small village in the state of Haryana, barely 100 kms from Delhi, who spent months at Jantar Mantar, a central protest site of the national capital of India in the winters of 2014. They had to flee their village as four school-going girls from their community were abducted and raped by "higher caste" people of their own village.

My feminist scholar friend Mary John tells me about the increasing incidents of sexual assault Dalit girls face and suspects that it had something to do with these girls crossing the traditional boundaries, insisting on going to schools and then moving to colleges. The "upper caste" people feel outraged to see the traditional "idiots" entering educational spaces, which were naturally theirs. What is that they seek, and why does it make the traditional elites feel threatened? Education and knowledge, of course. But also a desire to enter shared spaces and claim knowledge centers as their own.

It has been a long and tortuous battle for these castes, as testimonies from the nineteenth century onwards demonstrate and it still continues. Despite burning of houses, beatings, humiliation, rapes and murders and discrimination at the educational centers, Dalits and so-called "lower caste" people have not stopped their fight to storm the forts of knowledge, which had been impenetrable for them for thousands of years.

What do MOOCs offer these Dalit girls? Or to girls like Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan or the young girls of Afghanistan who are threatened, shot and killed by religious extremists? There is a view that MOOCs can act as a liberating force for these girls. It can save them from the bullets and yet help them attain knowledge, sitting in the safe confines of their homes before their computers or laptops. In short, they would adopt anonymity to attain knowledge, which would in turn help them free themselves.

Let us first look at the promises of the MOOCs. "Massive" is only one aspect of it. Here is a possibility of reaching lakhs of students through this platform. A teacher who puts in so much in preparing for a course would be optimizing her labor by getting access to an unimaginable number of students. They in turn, will be benefited by getting an opportunity to be learning from a professor she could never have afforded given her social and economic constraints.

COURSERA, one of the providers of MOOCs, claims that it has 8.2 million registered users and 678 courses, from 110 colleges, universities and other institutions. These users, who would be called students in traditional universities, are spread all over the globe. The courses are offered by some of the best on the faculty of universities in the United States. These numbers are staggering, and it is easy to persuade the education planners of a "third world" country like India that instead of investing in long-term liabilities called teachers and universities, buying licenses to use MOOC-based courses prepared by these companies is a less expensive way to satisfy the urge of the ever-increasing student population.

I am trying to argue that for the vast majority of this world (if not worlds) knowledge or education is about making a claim for their share of cultural capital. Space is a very critical aspect of it. Education has to be a physical reality for them. They want to feel it on and through their skins, sit in those places from which they were kept away for centuries.

Education is a communitarian affair for such societies. It has other implications for classrooms as well, whose composition has changed

dramatically. It is now very challenging for the teachers to find a new common language and they find themselves stripped of the security with which they had worked all along.

Education is an individual affair and yet it is crucially about creating collectivities. It cannot be done by making learning an activity pursued in isolation from the messy daily realities. It has also been said again and again and is worth repeating that more than lectures it is the learning environment, which infects people with novel ideas. Students from diverse disciplines meeting each other at a public talk or a coffee shop gain something, which falls outside the structured space of syllabus or curriculum. It cannot be assessed or evaluated but it changes the worldview of young boys and girls and the world also starts getting changed by them.

Education, for new societies, or societies in formation has to be about creation of new communities, new proximities. Physical campuses are an excellent opportunity for them. That is why American universities score over others in the world. They have a cosmopolitan character; they draw the best minds as their faculty, and they are fortunate to have a very diverse international student population.

In my opinion, the biggest challenge all knowledge systems face today is: How to create dialogic societies? Only creating more and more shared spaces can do it. It is not about saving on costs. It is about creating international sensibilities.

When one moves about in the campuses of the university of Delhi or Jawaharlal Nehru University, one finds youth from Mizoram, Manipur, Jammu and Kashmir and Bihar mingling with each other. Their ears tune themselves to the sounds of languages they would never come across in their parental geographical or cultural areas they were born in. It should not be treated as incidental to their university education. I would rather say that it is one of the defining features of a university, to create possibilities for strangers to come together in class rooms, other activities on the campus and help them struggle to understand and appreciate this strangeness.

Brick-and-mortar universities privilege physicality. Education is an embodied experience for the students and teaching community. I would go as far as to say that being in a university also means trying to cope with the town or city it is part of.

In my view, one of greatest achievements of American liberal arts education system was Rachel Corrie: a young undergraduate student of the Evergreen State College who went to support people in no way connected to her – the Palestinians – and stood before an Israeli

bulldozer trying to prevent it from demolishing a Palestinian house. She paid with her life.

The question of the success of MOOCs is closely associated with the uneven nature of the universe of knowledge. As days pass, the knowledge divide between the North and South gets wider and deeper. Some MOOC enthusiasts claim that only ten great universities would, or should, deserve their place as universities in this century. All that we need to do is to produce smart knowledge technicians who would then create platforms to make knowledge produced by them accessible to the vast masses. In this manner, MOOCs would act as equalizers. It is, thus, an act of redistributive justice. Knowledge aspirants living in the Third World also have a right to access the knowledge that Ivy League university students enjoy.

The equalizing claim of the MOOCs divides the world in two neat categories: learner and knowledge provider. The companies involved in this business validate the knowledge that people should aspire for. Since a lot has been written about this aspect, about how some professors would attain the status of rock stars, and we know how stars are manufactured in the "mediatized" world, the unequal knowledge world would force universities on the lower rungs of the ladder to accept its choice. The courseware produced by the MOOC companies would form part of the syllabus of these universities. It takes away from the teacher the right to structure and design his/her own course.

There is lot of interest in the Indian corporate sector around MOOCs. A simple Google search would direct you to the official page of the FICCI (Federation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce), where an excited discussion is going on the efficacy of MOOCs. Indian universities have absolutely no idea about the future that is being planned for them. There is genuine fear that unequal power the corporates have in the planning process of state schemes would ensure a privileged position to their ideas and gradually MOOCs would be pushed down the throat of the reluctant and resisting faculty.

MOOCs do offer a lot to free-floating learners who are not looking for credentials to enter the job market and can also be treated as excellent supplementary material by teachers or students. In fact, one of the leaders of a MOOCs company asks people to see them also as textbooks. Critics have pointed out that there is a significant difference between courseware and a course.

That being said, we do need to ask: whose knowledge is this and who creates it? The epistemological premise of the MOOCs assumes that knowledge is something you can produce independent of the diverse

contexts we live in. Educational theories have said that knowledge is not brought in the classrooms from outside, it is constructed right there. It is not only the student who learns, it is also the teacher. But there is something called expertise, and universities are also a place to create and nurture it. All societies need it, they need to produce their own philosophers, psychologists and literary theorists.

A key issue will be if money will continue to be invested on hiring teachers. In a country like India, teaching has increasingly been contractualized. Teachers are hardly seen and respected as knowledge creators. They had long been seen as a community of evaluators. Was their judgment only important for endorsing the peer assessment process introduced by the MOOCs has been questioned by many scholars? Is it that with MOOCs claiming to provide high-quality education at very low cost, planners would start motivating university leaders to go for MOOC-based courses?

It is being felt in the corporate world that a stage may come when education would be untethered from physical campuses. The mobile phone revolution would help MOOCs reach a number unimaginable by current standards. However other challenges remain. Many feel that MOOCs based courses are of a very high quality, and majority of the undergraduate aspirants are simply not prepared for them. What would then be the solution then? Do we suggest diluting these courses to make students feel relaxed? Would it then not perpetuate the knowledge divide between elites and subalterns? The idea that students can cherry pick from the freely available courses is seductive. But can eighteen to nineteen year olds really decide in an informed manner? Are they sufficiently aware of the implications of the choice they are making?

The final question on my mind is: would those who can afford to go to the top-end universities stop going there in favor of the virtual learning space called MOOCs? We know the answer.

Notes

1 www.business-standard.com/article/management/online-education-gains-traction-114100200299_1.html
2 www.paristechreview.com/2014/08/26/MOOCs-education-china/
3 Basil Bernstein. 2000. Thoughts on the Trivium and Quadrivium: The Divorce of Knowledge from the Knower. In *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
4 Ibid., p. 85.
5 Zhen Huang. 2014. MOOCs: A Disruptive Revolution to China's Education System. *Paris Innovation Review*, August 26, 2014, online.

6 "An Open Letter to Professor Michael Sandel from the Philosophy Department at San Jose State University" April 29, 2013. Available at www.documentcloud.org/documents/695716-an-open-letter-to-professor-michael-sandel-from.html

7 Debra A Castilo. 2015. Teaching Gender in the Classroom and on the Stage. In Leila Gomez (et. al.) (Eds.), *Teaching Gender through Latin American, Latino, and Iberian Texts and Cultures*. Rotterdam: Sense Publisher, pp. 215–216.

8 Ibid., p. 219.

9 Ibid., p. 219.

12 The place of humanities in university education*

Mrinal Miri

Let me begin with a quote from the recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) set up by the Government of India in 2005:

> The higher education system needs a massive expansion of opportunities, to around 1500 universities nationwide, that would enable India to attain a gross enrolment ratio of at least 15 per cent by 2015. The focus would have to be on new universities, but some clusters of affiliated colleges could also become universities. Such expansion would require major changes in the structure of regulation.
>
> (NKC Report 2006)

Thus the primary purpose of the proposed expansion of the university system, as seen by the NKC, is the enhancement of the 'gross enrolment ratio'. While enhancement of opportunity of access to higher education is a natural goal of a modern liberal democratic political arrangement, the idea of pressing the university system into engaging primarily in the pursuit of this goal is debatable in the context of the received idea of a university. The Knowledge Commission was given the task of articulating the knowledge aspirations of the country and drawing a road-map for their fulfillment. The terms of reference of the Commission make instructive reading. They are:

- Build excellence in the educational system to meet the knowledge challenges of the twenty-first century and increase India's competitive advantage in fields of knowledge.
- Promote creation of knowledge in S&T laboratories.
- Improve the management of institutions engaged in intellectual property rights.

- Promote knowledge applications in agriculture and industry.
- Promote the use of knowledge capabilities in making government an effective, transparent and accountable service provider to the citizen and promote widespread sharing of knowledge to maximize public benefit.

I do not think it will be wrong to interpret this as conceiving knowledge as an application-oriented tool in the hands of society. Hyphenating science and technology clearly indicates the task of translating scientific knowledge into technological, therefore application-orientated, innovations; *'improve the management of institutions engaged in intellectual property rights'* puts knowledge firmly in the arena of business and commerce, as a property that can be commercially exploited, but that nonetheless needs protection from undesirable exploitation. *'Promote knowledge applications in agriculture and industry'*, further emphasizes the application orientation of the enterprise of knowledge; the final term of reference *(Promote the use of knowledge capabilities in making government an effective, transparent and accountable service provider to the citizen and promote widespread sharing of knowledge to maximize public benefit)* stresses the use (including dissemination) of knowledge as an instrument for promotion of transparent and effective governance.

Although there is no specific mention of university education in the terms of reference of the NKC, it is clear that there is no real distinction intended in them between knowledge being pursued in universities and knowledge being created in other institutions of learning and research. But is there, in reality, anything special about university education? In his extremely thought-provoking book *What Are Universities For?* Stefan Collini suggests that the university system has acquired a sense of identity in modern times, particularly in the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century. For a university to have a modern identity, it needs to have the following four characteristics:

1 it provides some form of post-secondary-school education, 'education' signals something more than professional training.
2 That it furthers some form of advanced scholarship or research whose character is not wholly dictated by the need to solve immediate practical problems.
3 That these activities are pursued in more than just one single discipline or very tightly defined cluster of disciplines.
4 That it enjoys some form of institutional autonomy as far as its intellectual activities are concerned. (Collini 2012: 7)

Even this minimal characterization of a university implies something extraordinarily significant, and this is that if any institution is set up for a specific practical purpose, as a government is wont to do, but has these minimal characteristics of a university and is called a university, the logic of these attributes will ensure that the institution will necessarily exceed its brief. To take them in order, an institution set up to provide post-secondary-school *education*, but with the purpose of imparting professional training, must include education, and, therefore, go beyond professional training, because education is a larger idea than just professional training. The logic of 'advanced scholarship or research' dictates that any institution established to engage in such activity, cannot confine itself solely to solving immediate practical problems. An institution meant for advanced scholarship or research only in one discipline or in a tightly defined cluster of disciplines, must, because of the very nature of such scholarship and research, make serious forays into a multiplicity of other disciplines. Research and scholarship cannot have predetermined destinations. They cannot be controlled to yield only preconceived results: surprise, creativity and the hitherto unarticulated are internal to the very nature of research and scholarship. Institutions that sustain and promote research must, therefore, be largely free from external control.

While it is important to make the distinction between knowledge that is applied to sorting out immediate (or maybe not so immediate practical issues) it is also important, perhaps even more so, to distinguish between knowledge that is driven primarily by the idea of verification and knowledge that is informed by the idea of *understanding*. Knowledge that the natural sciences pursue is primarily of the former variety. A knowledge claim in these sciences must normally include a roadmap by following which it can be confirmed or shown to be false. Of course no confirmation or falsification is ever absolutely final. The important point here is that the roadmap to verification or falsification is mutually agreed, and objective which makes, as Bernard Williams suggests, a *convergence* of views in the sciences a realistic possibility. Another aspect of knowledge driven by the idea of verification is that its product is quantifiable, expressible in mathematical formulations. Verifiability, quantification and predictability are close companions and scientific knowledge, at its best, must be characterized by all three. These notions are not central to the idea of knowledge as understanding; at the core of the latter is the notion of *meaning*. To understand something is to grasp its meaning; to misunderstand it is to attach a meaning to it that is different from the meaning it actually has; and not to understand something at all is not to be able to attach any meaning

to it. One's understanding can admit of degrees – it can be minimal, adequate and comprehensive – but, perhaps never complete.

The humanities are primarily concerned with pursuing knowledge as understanding. Stefan Collini's characterization of the humanities, as they are regarded now-a-days, is as follows:

> the [label] humanities' is now taken to embrace that collection of disciplines which attempt to understand, across barriers of time and culture, the actions and creations of other human beings considered as bearers of meaning, where the emphasis is to fall on matters to do with individual or cultural distinctiveness and not on matters that are primarily susceptible to characterization in purely statistical or biological terms.
>
> (ibid., 64)

The disciplines which, in our universities, are now classified as social sciences have, as it were, one leg in the humanities, and the other in the general territory of the sciences. The physiologist's account of the functions of the heart in relation to the rest of the human body has nothing to do with understanding meaning; similarly the physical anthropologist's statistical description of skull sizes and blood groups among sections of human population is not in pursuit of uncovering meanings and interpretation. The physiologist as well as the physical anthropologist is studying humans, but they are not concerned with humans either as bearers or creators of meanings. The social scientist, such as the anthropologist, or the sociologist, or the psychologist, to the extent that she uses purely quantitative or statistical methods, is close enough to the mainstream scientist to justify being called a scientist. Even so, however, prediction which is considered an essential function of the hardcore sciences is neither regarded as a primary concern of the social scientist, nor indeed as possible in the same way. And an important implication of this is that the idea of verification or falsification does not have the same role in the practice of the social sciences. Be that as it may, when the social scientist is engaged in the exploration of meanings either of individual human action or of human collectives and their creations, she is closer to the territory of the humanities. But, it may then be asked, are there then disciplines which belong, as it were, to the exclusive and stable 'heartland' of the humanities? The latest edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'humanities' (in the plural) as follows: 'The branch of learning concerned with human culture; the academic subjects collectively comprising this branch of learning, as history, literature,

ancient and modern languages, law, philosophy, art and music'. This broadly captures the use of the term in our universities today. The use of the term – it must be said – is of relatively recent origin. In early nineteenth-century Britain, the term used was 'letters', while some preferred 'moral sciences'. Later on in the century, a more acceptable organizational term was found to be 'arts' as opposed to the 'sciences'. Indian universities followed suit and accepted this terminology. In the first half of the twentieth century, the natural sciences emerged as the disciplines that set the standards of 'genuine' knowledge, also knowledge that makes incremental progress; disciplines such as economics, sociology, anthropology, psychology and even history began to show preference to be classified under the sciences, albeit with the prefix 'social', primarily, because, as it seemed to them, their vocation as being in the business of pursuit of knowledge was at stake. The 'scientific' turn in the business of knowledge was triggered by an official acceptance of the ideology of positivism in American universities and its aggressive advocacy by them. It is in reaction to this, what many considered to be a damagingly flawed faith in positivism that academics in Britain and the United States began in the 1950s to talk about the 'humanities' as consisting of disciplines which create knowledge that is not amenable to a positivist scrutiny. The cluster of disciplines mentioned in the OED definition may be considered to be the core disciplines of the humanities, although there may be different kinds of issues connected with some of them. Take history, for instance. The role that the idea of evidence plays in the practice of history is both massive and crucial. Although evidence may admit of different kinds of interpretations, and, therefore, different meanings, the centrality of evidence is what distinguishes history from, say, literature, or philosophy. Or take art and music. Both art (and all that is included in it) and music have scholarly, reflective and deliberative traditions that have greatly enhanced our understanding of ourselves and the human condition. These are traditions of thinking about the arts. And the arts themselves in their different ways explore the depths of meaning of the human condition. The study of the arts therefore quite firmly belongs to the humanities. However, performance, as in the performing arts, is not just a matter of interpretation and understanding; although it must involve this as well, it requires training and skill development which has dimensions that take the performing arts quite beyond the arena of the humanities. Although there is great depth of meaning – frequently only partly understood, in, say, Bhimsen Joshi's rendering of *raga Malkonsh* – the performance itself is a matter of talent and development of skill which is not confined to just exploration of meaning.

I have mentioned the generally accepted idea of 'convergence of view' in the sciences. Although, a debate about this is certainly possible, and has indeed taken place, there is unquestionably a large measure of agreement in the sciences. There can, for example, be a widely accepted account of the history of science – an account that will include a view of the debris of scientific theories which were once accepted but have now fallen by the way side. But such a history of, say, philosophy is not possible, or, for that matter, of sociology or anthropology or political thought. Disagreement in these disciplines is, of course, not as rampant as it is sometimes made out to be; but here agreement does not ever mean total acceptance nor does disagreement mean total rejection. Agreement very often is nuanced, leaving open the possibility of fresh debate, new perspectives and hidden divergences that may follow upon new interpretative understanding. Disagreement, similarly, does not mean rejection of insights which are part of what one is disagreeing with. It may be safe to say that there aren't these days too many followers of mainstream Marxism, but Marxist insights have become part of our common everyday vocabulary and thinking; similarly, Freudian theory might have been rejected on the basis of the unsoundness of its self-confessed foundations; but delete Freud from the history of modern thought, and you would have deleted a substantial part of the resources for our reflection on the human condition.

There may be two opposite views, say, about the history of philosophy: (a) *history* of philosophy cannot be properly called history, if it does not attempt an authentic recovery of philosophical thought as it was meant to be understood at the time and context of its practice; and (b) the only history that is possible and useful is history in the light of our contemporary philosophical concerns: 'possible' because the present unavoidably lurks in any view that we take of our past. One might say that this is a truth of our human condition. History of philosophy is therefore unavoidably anachronistic; and 'useful' because this is the only kind of history that can throw light on our present philosophical predicament. I take it that it is the second view of history or something close enough to that view that informs most writings on the history of philosophy. And it is not surprising therefore that philosophers from the past keep appearing and reappearing in philosophical debates as though they were themselves participants in these debates. There cannot be a story of linear progress of philosophical thought; there is always a back-and-forth movement. Added to this, there is always a multiplicity of 'contemporary' perspectives, and also a multiplicity of views within the same perspective. Such non-linearity

and lateral diversity characterize all disciplines in the humanities and indeed all disciplines in the human sciences. Each perspective, in its turn, has its own way of looking at the past. In the sciences, arguably, there is some linearity; and the kind of diversity that characterizes the humanities and the social sciences simply does not exist in the sciences. If in the humanities the past is, as it were, integral to their present practice, and they are thus naturally inclined to be backward looking, and, in the face of the diversity in their practice, and, therefore, diversity of outcome, can they be seen at all as advancing knowledge? Here, we must return to the distinction we made between knowledge and understanding and the idea that the primary concern of the humanities was with meaning. The humanities enhance and deepen our *understanding* of the human condition, and this by means of the exploration of meanings – meanings embedded in language, in human practices and actions, in things humans create, as in the art and artifacts, and how these meanings help create new meanings of the human condition. That there is much disagreement and diversity of perspectives is unsurprising because of the profoundly divisive uncertainties of the question, 'What does it mean to be human?' As Stefan Collini remarks

> The forms of enquiry grouped together under this label [humanities] are ways of encountering the record of human activity in its greatest richness and diversity. To attempt to deepen our understanding of this or that aspect of that activity is an intelligible and purposeful expression of disciplined human curiosity and is – insofar as this phrase makes any sense in this context – an end in itself.
>
> (ibid., 85)

How then are our universities to handle the humanities? Or, to put it more directly, what is the justification for having a place for them in the universities at all?

While it is important that the 'national agenda' of greater economic prosperity must find a place in the university's academic life, this can neither exhaust the entire field of university's activity, nor can it indeed be its most important and, therefore, most favorably funded activity. The two minimally specific tasks of a university are: (a) that it provides *education* at the post-school level, and 'education' means much more than training in professional skills; and (b) that it 'furthers some form of advanced scholarship or research whose character is not wholly dictated by the need to solve immediate practical problems' (ibid., 7). Research in what are called the basic sciences enhances and deepens

our knowledge of the physical world including living beings insofar as they can be treated as part of the physical world. Such advancement of knowledge almost always has a technological spin-off, and in recent history of knowledge, such spin-off has been so spectacular that it has taken center stage in what is called *knowledge economy* and has almost emptied the concept of knowledge of its original meaning as a pursuit of purely non-instrumental human curiosity. Enhancement of knowledge in this sense has no justification other than being regarded as an end in itself; or we might say with Wittgenstein that justification must come to an end ('If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned') (Wittgenstein 1953: #217). Pursuit of the humanities and research in the humanities and the social sciences extend and deepen our *understanding* of the human condition – its past, present and extraordinarily diverse dimensions. Justification of such pursuit – if at all it is called for – is to be found not in some external end that it might serve, but in the nature and quality of the pursuit itself. This is best articulated in a possible answer that we might give to the question, 'Why do we value one piece of writing in the humanities as opposed to another?' Such an answer might have not so much to do with the information that the piece of writing provides or even in its strictly propositional content, but

> rather with matters of perspective, of tone, of nuance, of apparent authority and so on. More specifically still, what we admire and respond to in the best work are certain qualities of noticing and characterizing, certain powers of illuminating and persuading. This can involve merely drawing attention to things previously overlooked and unrecognized, but more often the way in which the noticing and recognizing is expressed, the texture of the characterizing, conveys to the reader something of the flexibility of intelligence, or responsiveness of sensibility at work. The angle of entry to the topic, the distribution of emphasis, the implicit placing or comparison, the specific touches by which a world, an episode, a figure or a book is conjured up and given density or inwardness – all these things convey to us something of the depth of understanding which is present and, as it were, underwriting any particular statement.
>
> (Collini 2012: 73)

To judge the performance of the disciplines labeled as humanities on the basis of their record in the 'placement cells' of universities is, therefore, to completely misunderstand their place in such institutions.

I shall conclude with a pithy quote from Stefan Collini to whom I am greatly indebted in much that I have said in this chapter: 'If we find ourselves saying that what is valuable about learning to play the violin well is that it helps us develop the manual dexterity that will be useful for typing, then we are stuck in a traffic-jam of carts in front of horses' (ibid., 91).

Note

* The paper contains matter which has appeared in my previously published work, *Philosophy and Education*, Oxford University Press (OUP) India, 2015.

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Index

Agamben, Giorgio 22, 128
Agrawal, Anant 192
Althusser, L. 47
Arabic 16, 192
Aristotle 45, 73, 156, 165
Arnold, M. 69–72, 140
Artaud, Antonio 117
Asian University for Women 157
Assmann, Jan 96
Athenian Stranger 5, 140–1, 143–4, 149, 153, 156, 165, 167–8
Autopoetic 115–16

Babson Survey Research Group 189
Baldick, C. 69
Balslev, A. 36
Baudrillard, Jean 123
Bernstein, B. 191–2
Berry, David 79
Bhattacarya, K. C., 39
Bhattacharyya, Subrata 36, 48
Boltzmann, L. 52
Borgesean 117
Bourdieu, Pierre 93
Bruni, Leonardo 15
Buddhism 42, 55
Burns, Robert 148
Burton, Robert 79

Caliban 106
Carlyle, Thomas 141, 147
Carnap, R. 129
Chandra, Pankaj 192
Chandrasekhar, S. 53
Chattopadhyay, Bankimchandra 16
Chomsky, N. 129
Choodi Bazar Mein Ladki 190
Christian humanism 31
Cicero 14–15, 30
classical humanism 31
Coetzee, J. M. 18–20, 24, 102
cognitive certainty and a cognitive modesty 73
Collini, S. 143, 203, 205, 208–10
colonialism 9, 11, 73, 166–7
computational humanities 77
computer and neuro-sciences and consciousness studies 39
Constantine Huygens 53
Copernicus 50
corporates 1, 199–200
Corrie, Rachel 198
COURSERA 190, 197
creative writing 5, 142, 144, 151–2, 155, 159, 164, 167–8, 171
crisis 8, 17–18, 20, 67, 69, 85, 114, 181
Culler, J. 182
cultural informatics 77
Curie, Marie 159

deep blue 120
Derrida, J. 101, 103, 107
Descartes, R. 22, 32, 39, 43, 54, 58
Devi, Mahasweta 158–9
Devi, Shakuntala 158–9
Dickens, C. 107–8
digital humanists 80
digital humanities 2–3, 21, 77–8, 80–2
distinction between human and animal 22
Donald, Merlin 91–2, 94

Eco, Umberto 151, 169
Elegy, Duino 23
Elizabeth, I. 58
Elizabeth Costello 24, 102
episteme 6, 178, 180

factual knowledge 43
Federation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce 199
Feyerabend, P. 52
first-order normative questions 183
Fish, Stanley 80
five models of the university 149
Flyvbjerg, Bent 179
Foucault, Michel 149
Freeman, John 86
Freud, S. 103, 207

Galileo 15, 50
Gladwell, Malcolm 147
Gogh, Van 111
google books 83
gothic 105–6, 120
Graff, G. 69
Grafton, A. 55, 58
Graham Priest 128
Groys, Boris 111
Gruen, L. 125
Gumbrecht, H. U. 182

Hawking, Stephen 52
Heidegger, M. 4, 22, 99–104, 107–9, 111, 121, 154–6, 165
Higgins, John 18–19
history of philosophy 101, 136, 207
history of university education in India 29
horizontal and vertical growth 47
Huang, Zhen 193
human progress 34–5, 43, 46, 48, 57
Humboldtian university 68

Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science 16
Indian Council of Philosophical Research 1, 26, 36
Indian Institute of Science 16
internet or virtual university 160
Internet University 6, 160, 162, 168
Ionian scholars 32

Jacotot, Joseph 141, 143, 168
Jaipur Fest 167
James I. 58
Jamsetji Tata 16
Joshi, Bhimsen 206
Joycean 117

Kafkesquean 117
Kamuf, Peggy 118
Kant, I. 2, 39, 43–4, 68, 101
Kirsch, Adam 21
Klemke, E. D. 180
knowledge for the sake of knowledge 34
Kuhn, Thomas 9, 113, 185
Kumar, Krishna 190–2

Lafont, Father Eugene 16
language 15–17, 23–4, 40, 52–3, 75, 93–4, 100, 102–3, 107–9, 117–21, 126, 128–9, 142–3, 164, 166, 170–1, 198, 206–8
Latour, Bruno 130
Leavis, F. R. 3, 69, 72, 74, 140
Lectures on the History of Literature 68
liberal arts 14–16, 20–1, 30, 32, 70, 142, 157, 198
Lives of Animals, The 24
Loon, B. 47
Lord Amherst 16
Lord Curzon 16
Lyotard, Jean-François 150, 164

Mahabharata 93
Majumdar, C. K. 38
Malabou, Catherine 100, 119
Man, Paul de 107
Marxism 207
Mazzeo, J. A. 35, 53
Metaphysical 22, 45, 92, 108–9, 126, 129, 183
mimetic dimension 93
Ministry of Human Resource Development 189
Miri, Mrinal 184

modern European philosophy 39, 43
modern scientific revolution 36, 45
Modi, Narendra 189
Moretti, Franco 80
mythic cultures 93

Nancy, Jean Luc 101
National Council of Education 16
National Knowledge Commission (NKC), 202
naturalism 31
nature 12, 15, 24, 32–3, 35, 38–9, 43, 45, 94, 100, 123, 136, 142–3, 150, 164–5, 190, 199, 204
necessary truth 43
Nehru, Jawaharlal 154–6
new humanities 2, 21–2, 24
new knowledge 7, 34, 118, 143
Newman, John Henry 18, 69–70, 72, 147–8
New York Times 80, 190
Nicomachean Ethics 73
notion of certainty 43
Nussbaum, Martha 85

Obeyesekere, G. 92
Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 48
Osborne, R. 47
Otherization 102

Pascalian 106
Passmore, John 136
pedagogy of dissensus 74
Penrose, R. 39
Persian 16
philosophy 2–5, 10–12, 17, 19, 22, 32, 36–43, 45–6, 50, 54–8, 68–9, 80, 87, 90–1, 111–12, 118, 136–9, 152, 180, 184, 193, 206–7
Pinker, Steven 11
Pitroda, Sam 192
place of science in university 42, 50
Plato 5, 140
Polanyi, Michael 127
post-colonial university, the 70
posthistorical 111
post human 2–4, 14, 22, 111, 112, 114, 115, 119, 122, 125, 127
posthumanistic technoeco-human geoacademia 100
Potter, Karl 40
Presner, Todd 81
primary and secondary religions 96
Putnam, H. 44, 50, 54, 105

quadrivium 15, 21
quality of knowledge 34
Quine, W. V. 36, 54

raga Malkonsh 206
Ramayana 93
Ranciere, Jacques 5, 140–6, 148–51, 157, 160, 163–6, 168–9, 171–2
Raunig, G. 99, 122–3
Ray, Rammohun 16
Readings, Bill 67
reflexive disposition 181
Renaissance 17, 22, 30–3, 36, 53, 72, 15; European Renaissance 30–1; Italian Renaissance 31
rights-based university 156–7, 159–60
Rorty, Richard 36, 107–8, 113
Ross, Kristin 143
Rubens, P. 53
Rudner, Richard 136
Rushdie, Salman 147, 152, 167
Russell, Bertrand 86

Said, Edward 9, 147
Salutati, Coluccio 15
Sandel, Michael 147, 193
Sanskrit 16–17, 40, 166, 169
Sarkar, Mahendralal 16
Schiller, F.C.S. 138
scientific method 44, 50, 54
scientism 2, 11–12, 30, 32, 42, 44, 46, 54, 186
secularism 31
Sellari, F. 52
Shakespeare, W. 15, 146
Shanghai Jiaotong University (SJTU) 190, 193
Shantiniketan 6, 162, 164, 168
Slow Man 24

Smith, Wilfred Cantwell 86
Snow, C. P. 6, 17, 30, 36, 69, 176–7
social science 1, 3–4, 85–7, 91–7, 120, 126–7, 136–9, 143, 155, 166, 176–84, 205, 208–9
Socrates 32, 43, 70, 152
Socratic 20, 32, 141
soteriological 47–8
South Africa 20
Sparta 47
Spencer, Herbert 40
Spivak, G. 142, 167
Srinivas, M. N. 93
Stalin, J. 111
studia humanitatis 14–15, 22–3, 30, 32
Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) 189
superstition 12
Swinburne, Richard 54

Tagore, Rabindranath 6, 53, 84, 163–5, 168–9
Taussig, M. 106–7, 128
Taylor, Charles 86, 92, 179
techne 6, 178, 180
travelling university 165–7
trivium 15, 21
Tsinghua University 190
Turner, Victor 93

Umanista 15, 80
University of Calcutta 147
University of Delhi 192, 198
US Department of State 189

Vedanta 2, 41–2, 55
Vedantic India to spiritual and mystical India 55
Vergerio, Pierpaolo 15
Vishwabharati 162
Viswanathan, Gauri 16, 69
Vivekanada 112

What Are Universities For? 203
what it means to be free 89
Williams, Bernard 204
Wittgenstein, L. 127–9, 176, 209
Woolf, Virginia 158–9

Yousafzai, Malala 197

Žižek, S. 116, 118

This volume examines the critical role of the humanities in universities in India and attempts to redefine its place, meaning and function in education. Bringing together distinguished scholars in the country, it debates the status and predicament of the humanities in the academic programmes within universities. The issues raised here touch upon the entire gamut of problems that a university faces in finding an adequate, rightful and wholesome place for the humanities in its academic curriculum. It discusses the difficulties in the specific identity of disciplines classed under the humanities, the powerful reach of the sciences and technological inroads in the teaching and practice of all disciplines, the relative academic balancing of disciplines in different universities in India, the culture, value and the idea of the university, digitisation of the humanities and online access and their specific impact on research in the concerned disciplines. The volume also presents an instructive debate on the so-called appropriation of traditional social science concerns by other departments.

This book will interest those in education, humanities and social sciences, governance and public policy, and South Asian studies.

Mrinal Miri taught Philosophy and retired as Vice-Chancellor of North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, India. He has previously served as Chairman, Indian Council of Philosophical Research; Director, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla; Chancellor, Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh; and Chairman, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). He has also been a nominated member of the upper house (Rajya Sabha) of Parliament of India.

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